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IN WUYUAN, JIANGXI

EATING IN CHENGDU

229

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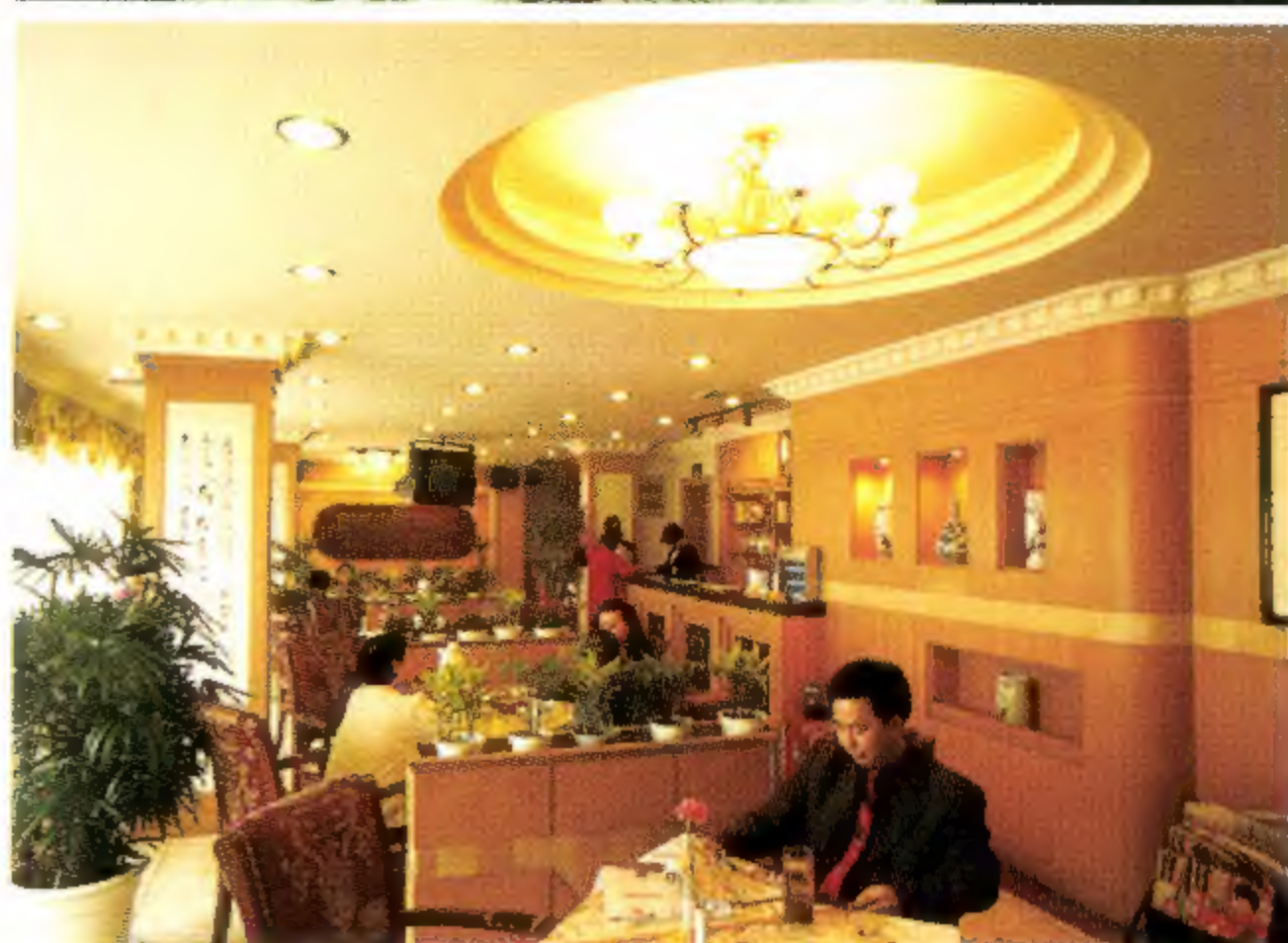
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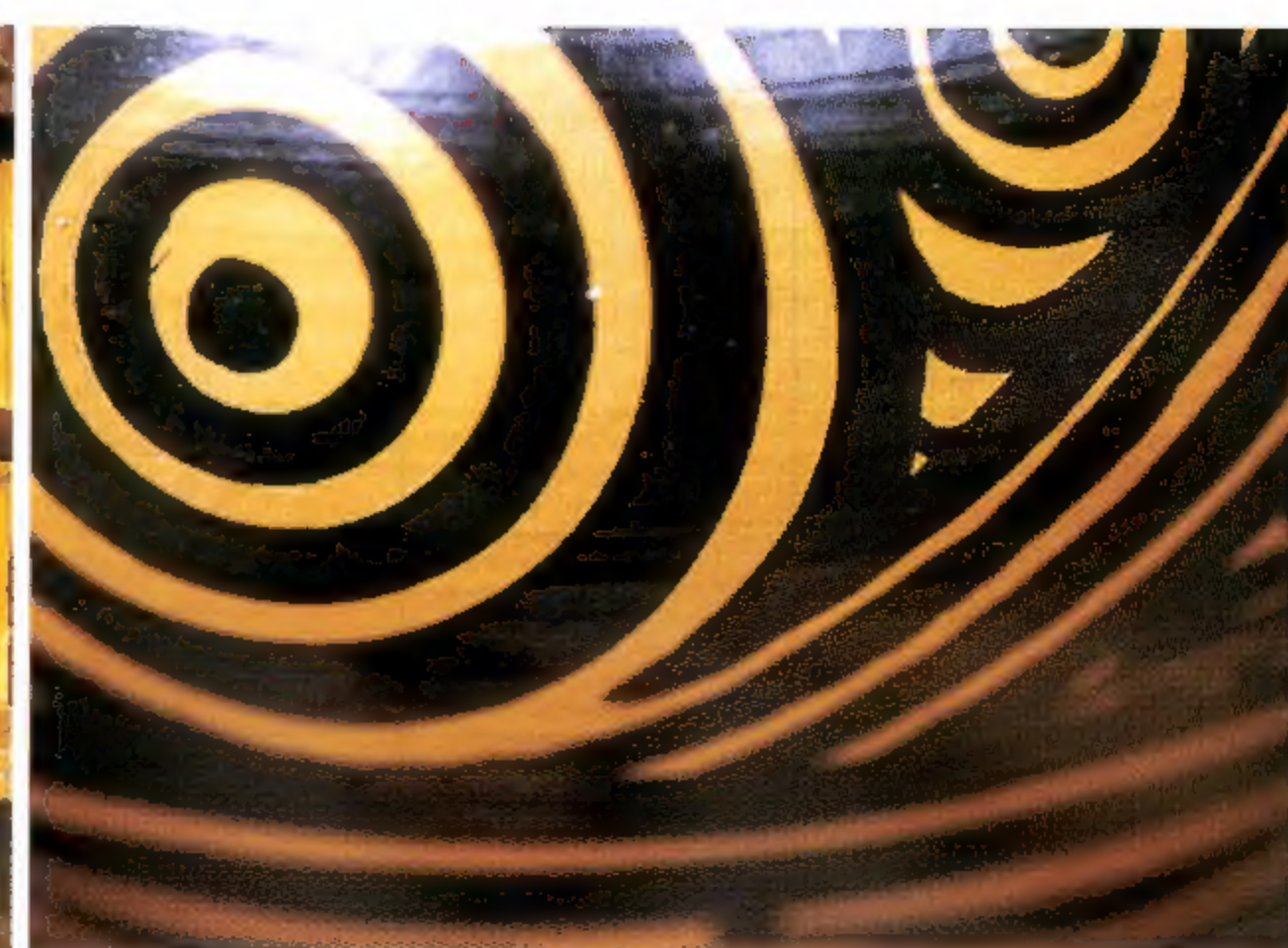
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Photos by Li Wuzi Article by Zhang Hua, Shi Jin

The land lying to the south of Lanzhou in Northwest China's Gansu Province is set in harmony with mountains, rivers and lakes. In summer, the vast grassland turns to a gorgeous world of flowers. The local people of different ethnic groups gather in this charming season and sing their "flowers". The flowered grassland, the first bend of the Yellow River, the cool weather, ancient temples and unique local customs all together make the place an irresistible attraction to tourists.

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Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, is really a gourmet's paradise. There are so many varieties of food that it is not easy even to learn about their names. In addition to the famous

Sichuan-style hotpot, salmon, a dish often seen in Western and Japanese cuisine, can also be cooked into numerous characteristic Sichuan dishes to serve a whole banquet.

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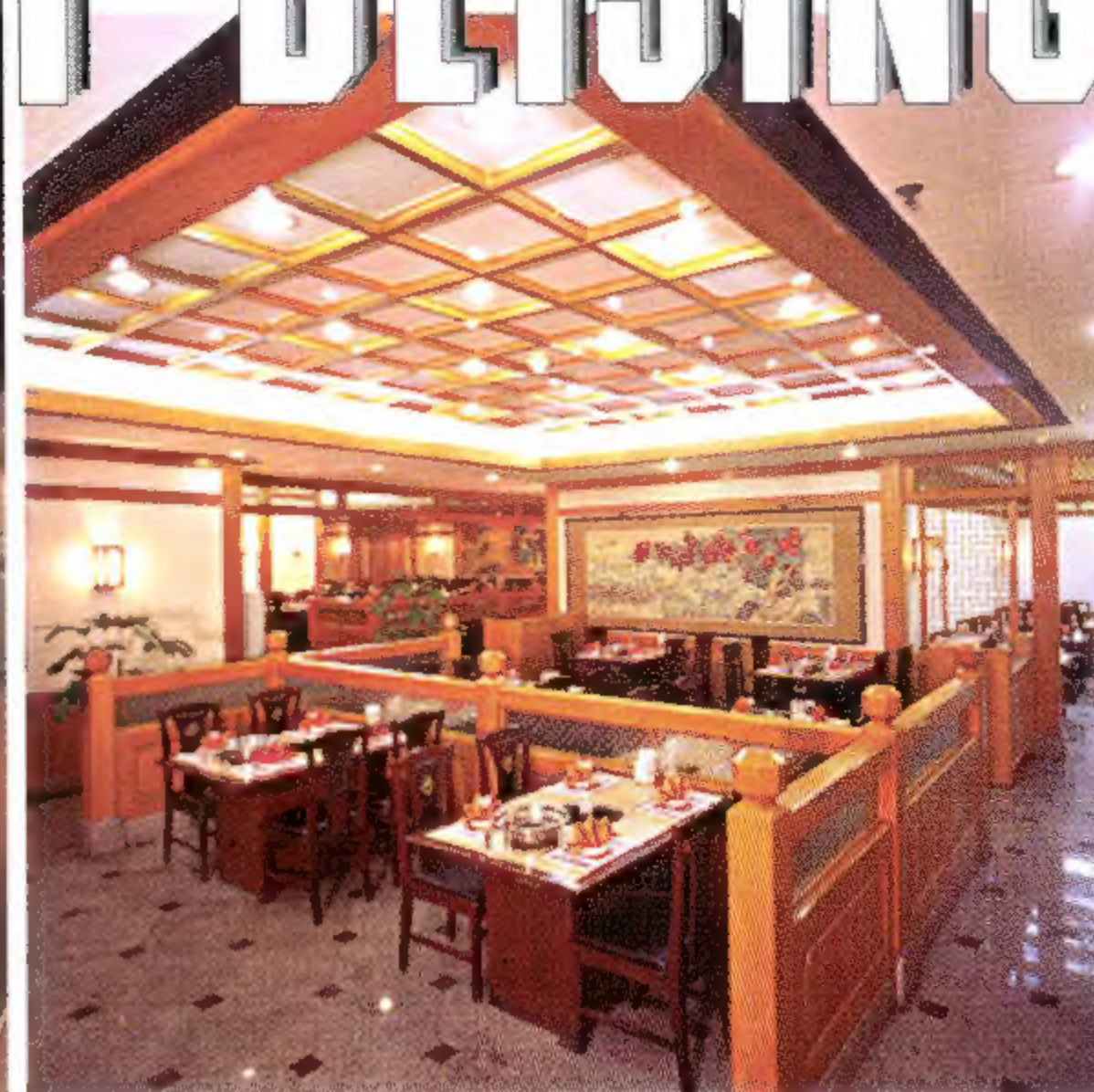
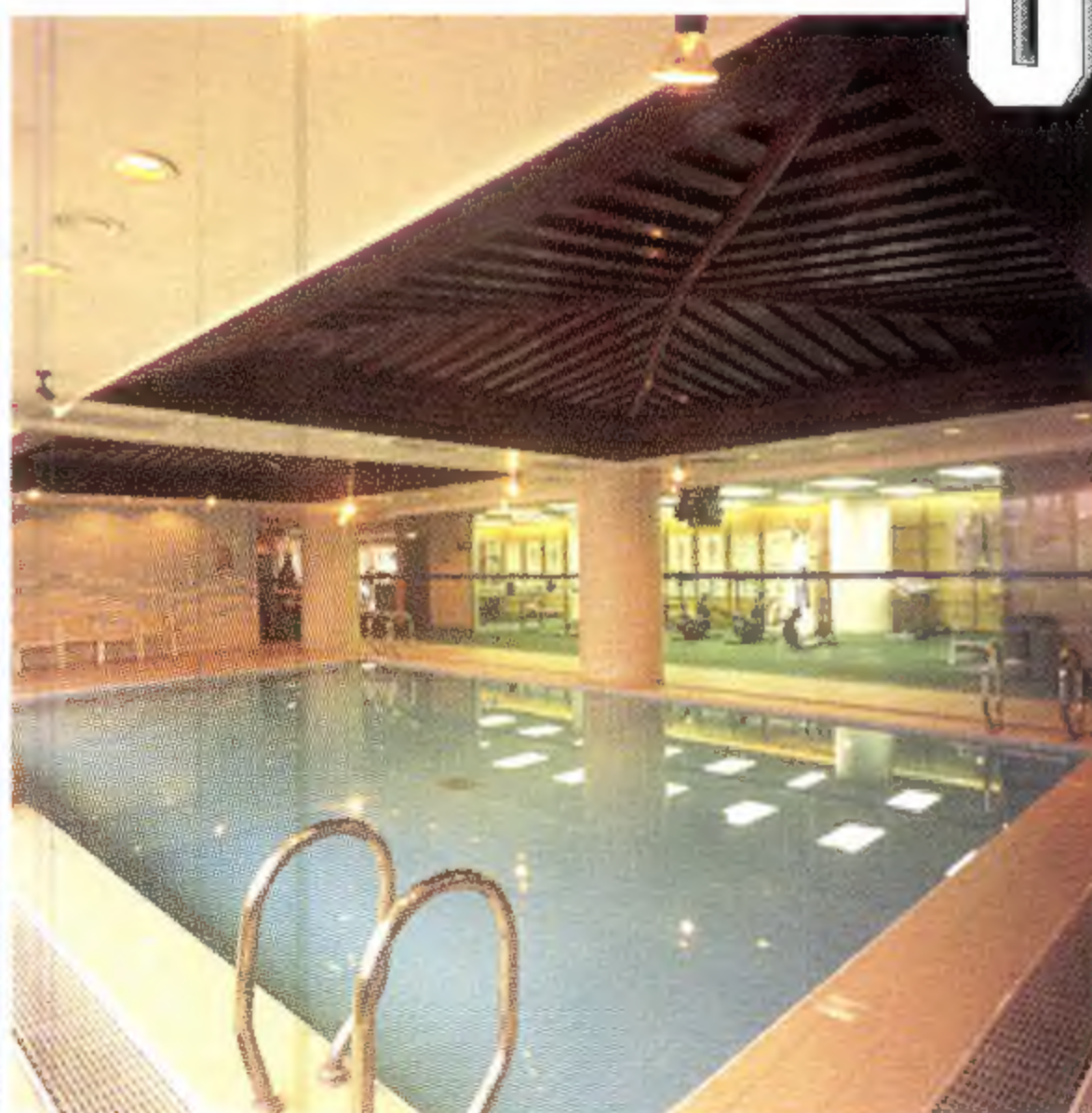
Wuyuan in Jiangxi Province has been known since ancient times as "the town of learning". Nestled in its surrounding picturesque landscapes are many villages built during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Their houses are beautiful and characteristic; their cultural legacy is rich; and their attraction is beyond anyone's expectation.

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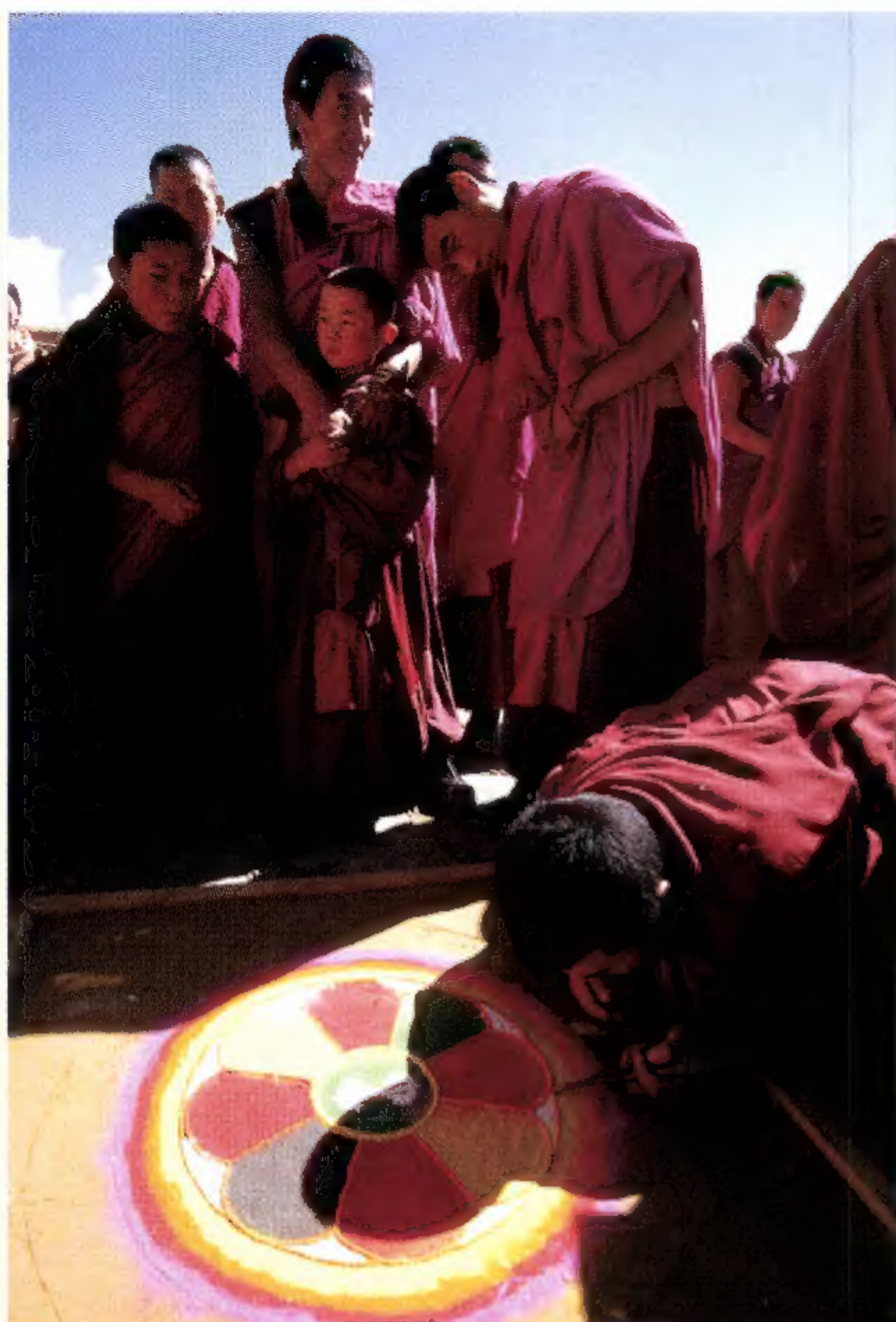
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FROM THE EDITOR

In the summer heat, let's travel northwestward to pay a visit to a kingdom of flowers in southern Gansu Province, the area to the south of the provincial capital, Lanzhou. There, you can feast your eyes on a sea of flowers, and spoil yourself in the amazingly pleasant "autumn" weather. Apart from its extensive verdant grasslands, the region also bewitches you with the first bend in the Yellow River and the quaint old temples nestling in the lofty mountains.

Of course, there are numerous choices other than southern Gansu for you to escape from the heat. Going up into the mountains or staying by the seaside are some traditional options for spending the summer. Yet there are still plenty of new alternatives. Our reporter offers you a list of summer resorts for your summer-trip plan. There must be one that can satisfy you.

Though Wuyuan in Jiangxi Province may be less well known to ordinary travellers, its poetic landscape is as enticing as the many famed tourist attractions in the country. Besides, the serene villages there dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties have nurtured a large number of outstanding figures, which has made the area even more noteworthy.

In Sichuan's capital, Chengdu, which is known as the food paradise, you can eat and drink to your heart's content. Its abundance of appetising snacks can drive any food-lover crazy. Our reporter brings you to visit some of the most famous restaurants in the city to try their dainty dishes. So let's follow him and enjoy this "mouth-watering" tour!

Photo by Shi Baoxiu



On this new, regular page we include letters and comments received from our readers. We welcome all suggestions, praise, criticisms and questions from our readers anytime. And we would also like to thank those who have already written in or responded to our surveys — we truly value your input. Please post, fax or E-mail your letters and comments to us (details at the bottom of this page).

LETTERS

Thank you for providing me with 10 years of a great magazine. I started my subscription in 1987 and even purchased the bound back issues. You have done a great job.

This summer I will be making my 14th trip to China and will use your magazine as a guide and also as a geography book.

Dr. Daniel Frey
Woodinville,
Washington, USA

I have the subject index for issues 1-90 and 91-105 of China Tourism. If your reader Virginai Burnell would like copies, I would be happy to supply them to her.

During the past year I have twice faxed to your correct fax number, a request for information on purchasing previous issues from the years before 1997. I have never had a reply. Perhaps you could E-mail this information.

Thank you from an avid reader of China Tourism.

Susan Trimble
Beijing, China
Email: trimble@canada.com

Editor's comments:

We always appreciate knowing that we are doing a good job. Although readers can get their basic information from travel guide books, our aim is to offer readers the real feeling of the locations, along with local data and practical tips.

Thanks to reader Susan Trimble for offering her help to another reader. To avoid any mishaps we suggest our readers direct their fax or E-mail enquiries to China Tourism English Department. All enquiries received will be answered.

READERSHIP SURVEY COMMENTS

Readers have suggested we include:

...more shopping, sports and athletes, performing arts, the big cities in greater detail...

Choong Yin Lee
Hong Kong

...more travel information hard facts, new trends, introductions to out-of-the-way places and theme issues...

Ingrid Booz Morejolin
Helsingborg, Sweden

...website addresses for information and hotel contacts...

P. Fromm
Shanghai, China

Editor's comments:

Several readers have asked for more stories on the people of China, including athletes. We are now bringing you such articles in the new "CityBeat" column. Our last issue included a story on Beijing's bid to hold the 2008 Olympics. To our "Tips for the Traveller" section found at the end of most articles we are now adding greater details in an effort to satisfy more readers who travel in China. The long feature stories often receive more criticism than praise, and we have taken our readers' comments into consideration. Our Executive's Memo pages now provide information on hotels and flights, but we shall also provide websites where possible. The following are a few useful ones for hotels:

- <http://www.hotelschina.com>
- <http://cbw.com/hotel/city.htm>
- <http://travel.china.com/en>

Please send your letters to:

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Travelling Beijing by Boat

Beijing used to leave visitors with the impression that it did not have many water scenes to offer. Now, you can travel along a 20-kilometre water route connecting two big lakes in the city, Yuyuantan and Kunming.

Thanks to the comprehensive urban water-system control project which started more than a year ago, the lakes and canals in the capital have been cleaned so that water routes are able to open for tourism. Beginning from July 1 this year, visitors can take a boat at Yuyuantan Park and travel all the way along a canal to reach the Kunming Lake in the world's largest imperial garden, the Summer Palace. Next year, the city will complete the construction of a 36-kilometre-long waterway to link up all the famous parks and historical sites.

In the suburbs of Beijing, more ecotour zones have been developed. These include the Tianchi Lake in the Yanshan Mountains, tree fossils at Qianjiadian, Dishui Lake, Qixian Hill, Zhenzhu Springs and Tianmen Pass in Yanqing County in the northwest part of Beijing.

Tourist Highway Opens in Dali

A 60-kilometre highway around the scenic Erhai Lake in Dali, Southwest China's Yunnan Province, has been joined up and opened to traffic. One of the major attractions of Dali, Erhai measures three to five kilometres wide and 40 kilometres long. With the opening of this new highway, travellers can ride from the eastern suburbs of Xiaguan, along the east bank of Erhai, to Yinsuo and Jinsuo islands, Haidong Township, Guanyin Pavilion and the fishing villages on the banks. On the northern bank of Erhai Lake, the highway connects with the Dali-Lijiang Highway.

Liao-Dynasty Ruins, Inner Mongolia

The site of Liao-dynasty ruins in Bairinzhua Banner, Inner Mongolia, has been developed into a tourist spot of historical interest and opened to public. Located in the southern suburbs of Lindong Town, the ruins of Shangjing cover numerous cultural relics from the Liao (916-1125) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties. Among the well-preserved characteristic architectures are a tomb of the Liao founder, the Zuzhou City, numerous grottoes and two towers. The site served as the capital of Liao in 918. The local government plans to build the Liao Cultural City and the Liao Shangjing Museum to further develop tourism there.

300 Ancient Tombs Found, Hubei

Archaeologists recently found 300 tombs dating back to the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-221 B.C.) in Central China's Hubei Province. Located in Xiaochang County, the tombs are scattered in an area of 5.3 square kilometres. The site is 300 metres from the ruins of a city dating back to the same time. It is believed that it was the graveyard of the ancient city. The tombs have three chamber patterns: oblong, square and in rows.

Oldest Altar of Heaven, Xi'an

A small mound found near by the South Gate of Xi'an, the capital of many ancient Chinese dynasties, has been identified as the earliest altar of its kind that so far has been found. It was built 1,000 years ago during the Sui Dynasty (581-618). Historical records show that it served as the imperial symbol during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), but was deserted later.

The eight-metre-high altar is round and has four layers, each narrower than the one below. The first layer is 54 metres in diameter, while the highest is 20 metres. The round altar confirms the ancient Chinese idea that the heaven was round, the earth square. It has a dozen staircases radiating in different directions; each staircase has a dozen steps. The stairs were named after the names that the ancient people gave to the 12 distinct chronological sections of a day.



Large Waterfall Group, Jiangxi

An extraordinarily large group of waterfalls was recently found in Shangyou County, in southern Jiangxi Province of East China. The group of waterfalls is located in a primitive forest in Jiaokeng Village in the Wuzhifeng Township. At 1,000 metres above sea level, the 22 waterfalls form drops of more than 500 metres, creating deafening sounds and unbelievable magnificent scenes.

Jiangsu: Room for Improvement

In a national survey, Guangdong was considered the richest province in China and that the people living there the most business-savvy. It also revealed that Beijing ranked first in cultural and educational status, while Shanghai was hailed as the city people like best.

The survey conducted by Beijing Horizon Market Research Company covered 5,673 people living in 10 cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Dalian, Zhengzhou, Shenyang, Xi'an, Chengdu and Nanning.

Meanwhile, the eastern province of Jiangsu was rated the sixth "richest province". It was also listed fourth in educational development after Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong.

Researchers from Beijing Horizon Market Research Company said Jiangsu has a good industrial foundation and they suggested the province to learn from Guangdong, Fujian, Shanghai and Zhejiang to help improve its own regional economic management.

Temple Relocation at the Three Gorges

The temple in memory of the famous ancient poet Qu Yuan has to be moved so as to avoid being submerged by the huge reservoir of the Three Gorges Project under construction.

The Qu Yuan Temple is now located in his native county Zigui in Hubei Province, along with his tomb. The temple was first built in 820 during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It was relocated in the mid-1980s, following the construction of the Gezhouba Dam on the Yangtse River, for keeping the relics clear of the river's rising water level. With the construction of the giant Three Gorges Dam, the temple again faces the threat of being submerged.

The provincial and county cultural departments have decided to relocate the whole temple together with the resettlement of the county town of Zigui. After careful consideration and a survey, experts have found a good location for the temple on the beautiful Fenghuang Mountain. At the new site covering 20 hectares, in addition to an altar surrounded by three square tiers of white marble and a statue of Qu Yuan, a museum and a folk costume hall will be added.



Restoration of City Under Water, Jiangsu

The ancient city of Sizhou in today's Xuyi County, Jiangsu Province, used to have many historical and cultural sites, including the Puzhaowang Temple, one of the five most famous temples of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the Guangchun Pavilion with tablet inscriptions by Ouyang Xiu, a noted Northern Song-dynasty literate and calligrapher, and the Moon City and Moon Gate. During Emperor Kangxi's reign (1662-1723) in the Qing Dynasty, heavy rainstorms hit Sizhou for over 70 continuous days, rendering the ancient city of over 900 years submerged by floods.

The local government of Xuyi County, Jiangsu Province, plans to recover the original city of Sizhou which has slept under water for 300 years. Archaeologists believe that the ancient city's streets and house foundations remain in good condition. Together with the excavation of the Ming Tomb and the Tieshansi National Forest Park, the ruins of the ancient city will attract more tourists to this area.

Saving the Endangered Yangtse River Dolphin

The Yangtse River white-flag dolphin is the most endangered dolphin species in the world. It is expected to be facing possible extinction within 25 years. There are now less than 100 white-flag dolphins living in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtse River and Chinese scientists are looking for the best method to protect them.

The white-flag dolphin requires a quality environment to survive, including clean water with a low-germ content and adequate fresh food. The dolphin population is shrinking because of the rapid development of fishing, shipping, water conservation and pollution in the river. Experts suggest that the dolphins be moved to a nature reserve with an environment similar to their original habitat. The possible sites they have chosen are located in Hubei and Jiangxi provinces, both on the middle reaches of the Yangtse River. However, the dolphins are difficult to catch and raise. A white-flag dolphin swims at speeds up to 60 kilometres an hour, while the boats used to catch them for relocation can only sail at 15 kilometres an hour. Scientists call for more money and man power on the project for Yangtse River dolphin protection.

Sea Bridge on East China Sea, Zhejiang

The 2,706-metre bridge, which links the Zhoushan and Zhujiajian islands of Zhejiang Province on the East China Sea, recently opened to traffic. The bridge costs 270 million yuan (US\$32.5 million) and is the first bridge built on the East China Sea. Zhoushan and Zhujiajian are the two major islands of the Zhoushan Islands. The Zhoushan-Zhujiajian Bridge is one of the six bridges that the city of Zhoushan plans to construct. The islands will eventually be linked with the coastal city Ningbo in Zhejiang Province by bridges.

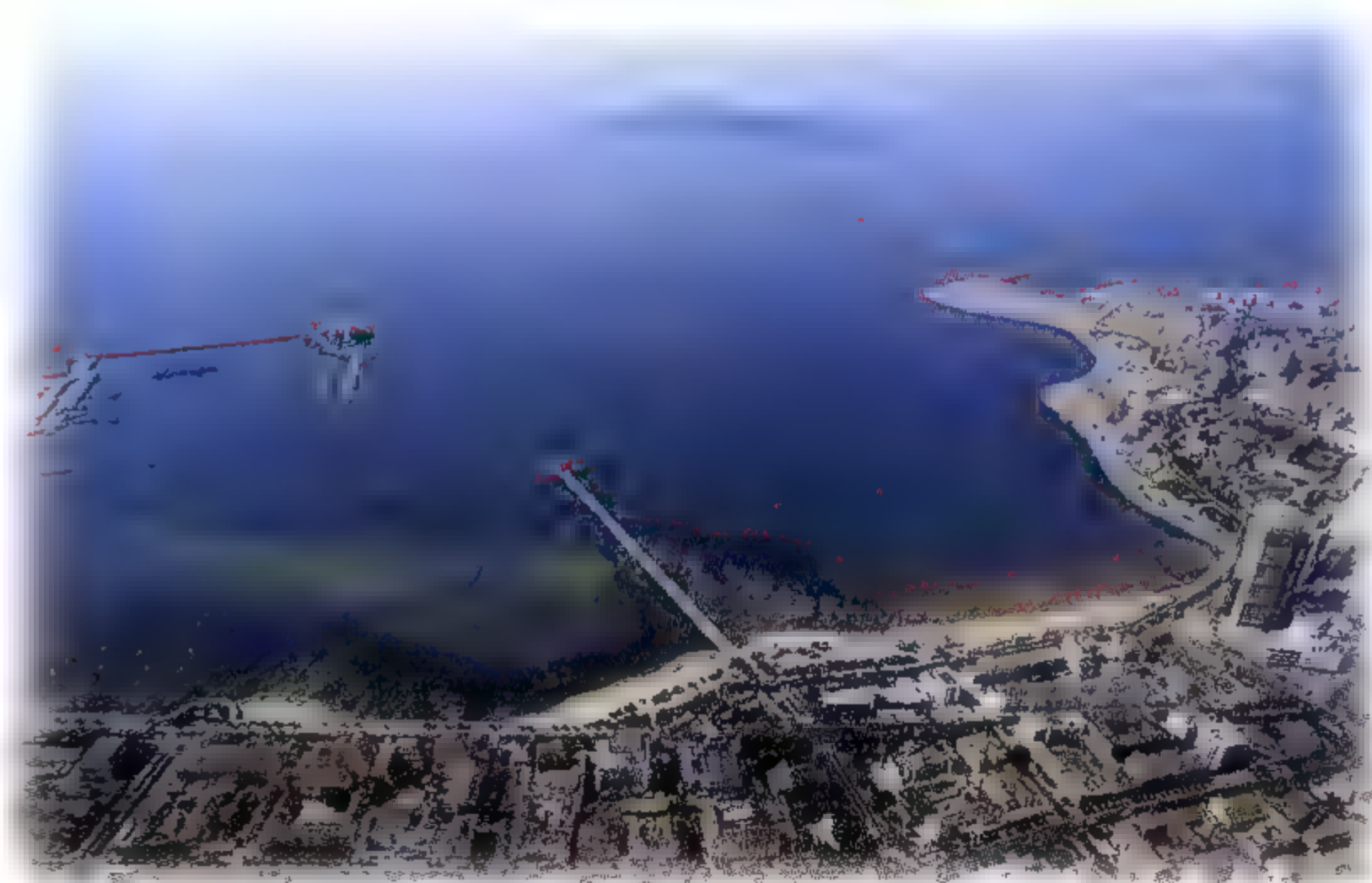
Festival/Qingdao



Qingdao Held the First Ocean Festival

Qingdao in Shandong Province hosted the city's first Ocean Festival from July 10 to 25, presenting to visitors items such as cultural shows, ocean technology exhibitions, water sports contests, marine travels and harbour and city sight-seeing tours.

The ocean technology activities were the highlights of the festival. Events included an ocean technological achievements exhibition, a marine organisms specimens exhibition, a seminar on ocean science and an ocean knowledge quiz. Water sports contests included the first motor-boat open competition ever held in the city, water sports performances and many other things. Furthermore, ocean cruises, island tours, ocean culture tours and ocean shopping tours all added colour to this gala occasion.



Airline/Zhangjiajie



Direct Flight from Hong Kong to Zhangjiajie

An air route linking Zhangjiajie and Hong Kong has been in operation since April 16. Zhangjiajie in Hunan Province was selected by UNESCO as a world natural heritage site and was named one of the 40 best tourist attractions in China. The city's Lotus Airport opened in August 1994 operates 23 air routes at present. It has served a total of 782,000 passengers. China Southern Airlines provides two flights connecting Zhangjiajie and Hong Kong every week on Tuesdays and Fridays. The flying duration is one hour and 30 minutes.



Airport/Yunnan



Yunnan Dêqên Airport Come into Operation

It has been believed by many that the legendary Shangri-La is found in Dêqên in China's Yunnan Province. This serene place overlooked by towering snow mountains and adorned with extensive grasslands is indeed reminiscent of a haven of peace. The opening of the new Dêqên Airport makes it easier for travellers to explore this piece of land.

Before, it took two days driving from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, to Dêqên. Now, following the launch of the Kunming-Dêqên air route on April 30, it takes only 50 minutes' flight.

Dêqên Airport is located five kilometres southwest of the county seat of Zhongdian. A total of 250 million yuan has been invested into the project. The airport is the ninth civil airport found in the province of Yunnan.

News/Nanjing



The New Look of the Nanjing Confucius Temple

Grand renovation works are taking place in the Confucius Temple in Nanjing, and it is expected that the temple will re-open in October with a new look. The Confucius Temple complex occupies a total area of 400,000 square metres. With the Dacheng Hall as its core, it was selected by the National Tourism Bureau as one of the 40 best tourist attractions in the country.

In recent years, the aged residential area on the periphery of the temple has gradually got out of harmony with the scenic area. Hence, the authorities of the city's Qinhui District have decided to renovate the area by widening the roads and reversing the deterioration of the residential area. A thousand families living in the dilapidated houses will have to move out. In addition, large scale afforestation projects have begun and rivers are being cleaned up. It is anticipated that the tourist environment of the Confucius Temple will be greatly improved.

After the temple is renovated, three travel routes will be formed: the land route starts from the East Archway and ends at the Curio Street of Xinfu River; the rebuilt Jiezi Garden and Taibai Tower, together with Laiyan Bridge, Wuding Bridge, and Zhenhuai Bridge will form the water route, linking up a dozen spots like Taoye Crossing,

the Former Residence of Wu Jingzi, the Former Residence of Wang Xie, and Wanqing Tower; Dilou Tower and Jiaozha Pavilion of Zhonghua Gate will be renewed and the Jiufeng Temple in Bailuzhou Park will be enlarged to form the last route, which is linked up with the city wall.





A Perfect Stopover on Your Trip — Golden Dragon Hotel

If you are planning to go to Kunming during the period of the '99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo, you are recommended to stay at the Kunming Golden Dragon Hotel.

Golden Dragon Hotel is the province's first international four-star hotel. Conveniently located on Beijing Road in the busy commercial district, the hotel is adjacent to the rail station and the long-distance coach terminus and is only 4.5 kilometres from the airport.

The hotel provides 290 luxurious guestrooms and suites. It is also equipped with a complete range of facilities, including an entertainment centre where an outdoor hot springs swimming pool, a sauna, a fitness centre, and beauty and hair salons are found. A shopping centre, a business centre, as well as eight Chinese and Western restaurants and a pub are available as well. The Chinese restaurants offer authentic Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangdong, Huaiyang and Shandong cuisine.

Add: 575 Beijing Road, Kunming, Yunnan, China Postcode: 650011 Tel: (871) 3133015



Asian's Only Fossil Forest Region to Be Built in Shenzhen

Shenzhen's Xianhu Park is now preparing to open the only fossil forest region in Asia in October.

In the northern section of Xianhu Park, there is a vast expanse of fossil forest which witnessed the tremendous climatic changes of the globe that took place 130 to 150 million years ago. The some 300 tree fossils, which have been turned into silica, were brought to light after being buried for more than 100 million years. The tallest one reaches eight metres and the thickest one has a diameter of more than one metre. The scars on the trunks and their growth rings are still visible.

Today, there are all together four fossil forests on earth. Three of them are located in the United States, the United Kingdom and Poland. The fossil forest in Shenzhen is the only one in Asia.



Wuyi Mountain — a World Heritage Site?

Wuyi Mountain in southeast China was granted approval in June last year to apply to UNESCO for listing as one of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage sites. The scenic spot totalling 999.75 square kilometres comprises the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, the natural reserve and the ruins of the Mingyue Kingdom of the Han Dynasty.

Following the application procedures, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee sent experts to Wuyi Mountain to make an on-the-spot investigation. An appraisal was submitted in July during the congress of the presidium and the committee will make the final decision in December. If the application is passed, Wuyi Mountain will be added to the list of World Cultural and Natural Heritage sites in the first half of year 2000.

Today, 21 spots in China have been entitled world cultural heritage, world natural heritage, or both world cultural and natural heritage sites. They include the Great Wall, the Terra-cotta Warriors and Horses, the Palace Museum, the Potala Palace, Jiuzhaigou, Wulingyuan, Suzhou gardens and Huangshan Mountain.



The First Pedestrian Cross-river Sight-seeing Tunnel in China

One more tourist attraction has been added to Shanghai: the Sight-seeing Tunnel of the Bund, the first cross-river sight-seeing tunnel for pedestrians, has opened. It is expected that the whole construction project will be completed at the end of this year, and the tunnel will come into operation in January, 2000. It links up directly the old district and the new Pudong district.

The east end of this Sight-seeing Tunnel is located at the foot of the Shanghai TV Tower at Lujiazui in Pudong, which is in the neighbourhood of scenic spots like the International Conference Centre and the Binjiang Road. The west end is at the north side of Chen Yi's sculpture on Nanjing Road East on the Bund. Inside this 646-metre-long tunnel with an internal diameter of 6.67 metres, visitors will be transported in a closed automatic vehicle operated by towing. It will take 2.5 to 5 minutes to cross the river. The tunnel is designed to serve a maximum of 5,280 passengers per hour.



Southern Gansu : A Grassland Covered with Flowers

Photos by Li Wuzi

Article by Zhang Hua, Shi Jin

The land of southern Gansu Province, situated south of its capital Lanzhou, comprises the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture and the Gannan (Southern Gansu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

The grasslands here look their seasonal best in summer, with flowers imbedded in rich meadows like many stars sparkling in the sky. The grasslands are set in harmony with mountains, rivers and lakes to form a fascinating world. Temples are found here and there, adding a religious touch to the landscape.

Linxia abounds in flowers as well. Actually flowers are ubiquitous in the prefecture, and local people fondly grow and marvel at the flowers.

A visit to southern Gansu in summer proves a most pleasant experience, for apart from the flowers and the unique scenery, the weather is cool and comfortable.





A Visit to the First Bend of the Yellow River



The moon tossed its silvery light on the undulating mountains on the shores of the river. The moonlit Yellow River was so pure and so peaceful, and there was a touch of shyness about it.

2

Visitors to southern Gansu usually follow the route from Xiahe to the Langmu Temple. In this way they would miss the beautiful grasslands at Maqu lying alongside the magnificent Yellow River.

The Yellow River at Maqu

Following an asphalt highway, we set off at noon from Xiahe (Labrang), drove unhurriedly for about 300 kilometres, and reached the hotel managed by the Maqu County Travel Service at 5 p.m. After having supper in the hotel, we rushed to the Cairima Scenic Area 20 kilometres away to shoot pictures of the first bend of the Yellow River at sunset.

The Yellow River flows into Gansu at Maqu from Jiuzhi County in Qinghai Province. On a vast grassland of 10,000

square kilometres the river skirts Maqu in south, north and east to form the magnificent first bend of the zigzagging Yellow River. The river runs for about 420 kilometres through Maqu County, accounting for half its total length in Gansu Province.

You can see the Yellow River wherever you go in Maqu. In fact, Maqu is the Tibetan for "Yellow River", thus Maqu became the only county in China named after the Yellow River. The first bend of the river consists of many twists and turns. On the flatlands of Cairima and Qihama townships in Maqu, the river slows down considerably, forming large sandbars, which, infested with undergrowth, are ideal homes for birds. That is why the area is frequented by bird watchers.

When we arrived, the setting sun was hidden behind huge puffball clouds. We had no alternative but to wait patiently.

Soon dusk fell, and the sun gave way to the moon, which tossed its silvery light on the undulating mountains on the shores of the Yellow River. The wind blew gently, humming the way someone recites a poem. All was quiet on the vast grasslands, even the barking of shepherd dogs had quieted down. Everything here seemed to be in a slumber. The moonlit Yellow River was so pure and so peaceful and there was a touch of shyness about it.

Late in the afternoon of the next day we visited the river bend once again. The sky was an azure blue, but all of a sudden it was covered by dark clouds and ravaged by lightning and thunder. We hurriedly hid ourselves in the jeep. Nearly an hour later, the storm stopped and a pinkish glow appeared on the horizon.



Yellow River Flows Like Molten Gold

Overjoyed by this unexpected good luck, we suddenly realised that the best photo spot was the top of a 200-metre-high hill. With only half an hour to sunset, I was breathing laboriously and my heart was thumping violently half way up. I stopped and looked at the scene, but found my position still too low to do justice to the magnificence of the Yellow River. With clenched teeth I continued up until I saw what I wanted through the lens. Under glorious rays of the setting sun, the Yellow River resembled molten gold flowing on the dark grassland. Holding my breath, I clicked the shutter. The scenery was so gorgeous and the position so hard to achieve that tears came to my eyes. Only then did I experience the joy of stretching my eyes over great distances from this vantage point. You never come across something so valuable and beautiful easily.

Disappointment and Rewards

Maqu is home to the well-known Hequ Horse, a breed that withstands the harsh weather on the highland. It can be easily raised and is tenaciously capable of climbing high mountains and crossing marshlands. The morning we left Maqu we went to see these horses in a ranch 15 kilometres south of the county seat. But by the time we reached the lake where the horses were usually watered, not a single horse was in sight.

The picturesque lakeside, however, somewhat made up for our disappointment. Had it not been for the swarms of flies, we would have slept right on the grassland by the lake. It turned out that all the horses had gone to the annual horse races on the grassland. We were even more disappointed when some Beijing painters who had attended the race told us about the local herdsman's great horsemanship and the grandness of the occasion.

Despite the letdown, the vast grasslands rewarded us with so many fascinating scenes and sights. The road between Maqu and Langmu Temple is relatively smooth, but it is 40 kilometres longer than a short-cut that has a 50-kilometre section of pebble road. We drove east for about 40 minutes when a gigantic herd of sheep and yaks appeared ahead of us. The guide told us, "How lucky we are — we are just in time to see the animals being moved to another grassland." We immediately picked up our photographic equipment to record the event.

Exodus of Thousands of Cattle and Sheep

By the time we climbed onto the top of a tiny hill and looked over our shoulders, we were surprised to find that our jeep had been swarmed by the cattle and sheep. There were tens of thousands of them, rumbling forward under the watchful eyes of Tibetan dogs. Since the dogs had lion-sized heads and ran fast and vigorously, to avoid trouble we kept our distance and shot one picture after another using telephoto zooms. It was no exaggeration to say we had come across an army of animals. In half an hour's time, at least 200,000 animals had rumbled by in formations that kept changing. They marched on flatlands like some ancient European armies, widely dispersed on hillsides and rushed through a ravine like rapids. A look at the horizon showed that there seemed to be no end to this massive exodus. Directing this colossal "army" were a bunch of mounted Tibetan women, who simultaneously galloped around and attended to children secured in baskets fastened onto the horses' backs. We had long heard about the industriousness and capability of Tibetan women and today it was a typical case of "seeing is believing".

Previous page: The brilliant grassland in southern Gansu in summer

1. The Hequ Horse is one of the three most famous horse breeds in China.
2. The zigzag Yellow River in sunset glow
3. Moving to a new pastureland
4. The Yellow River remains clear when it flows through Maqu County.





A Paradise of Flowers in the Great Wilderness

*These flowers, deeply rooted in the grasslands
and nestled by the side of the blue lakes,
bloom and wither in silence.*

The scenery of the first bend of the Yellow River is certainly not disappointing. But Maqu has something else to offer. Grasslands constitute 90 percent of the county's total area of 10,190 square kilometres, and all the grasslands are sprinkled with flowers in the summer season. Wherever we went in Maqu, we always found ourselves surrounded by flowers. We were so touched by their beauty that we often asked the driver to stop for a photographic session, mindless of the delays. Eventually I used nearly 10 rolls of film on these flowers. Most famous of these grassland flowers are the *gesang* flowers, which grow in thick clusters and dye the entire hillside a crimson red. Dandelions and wild chrysanthemums, too, thrive in this part of the world. There is

also a purple flower, known as "fragrant firewood flower", which bears a close resemblance to the *gesang* flower, but it is actually more fragrant and its bushes can be used as firewood. Not knowing the names of so many flowers, we had no alternative but to conjure some up according to the shape and colour of them, such as "large sea anemone", "small starfish", "red strings", "yellow strings", "wind-bells",

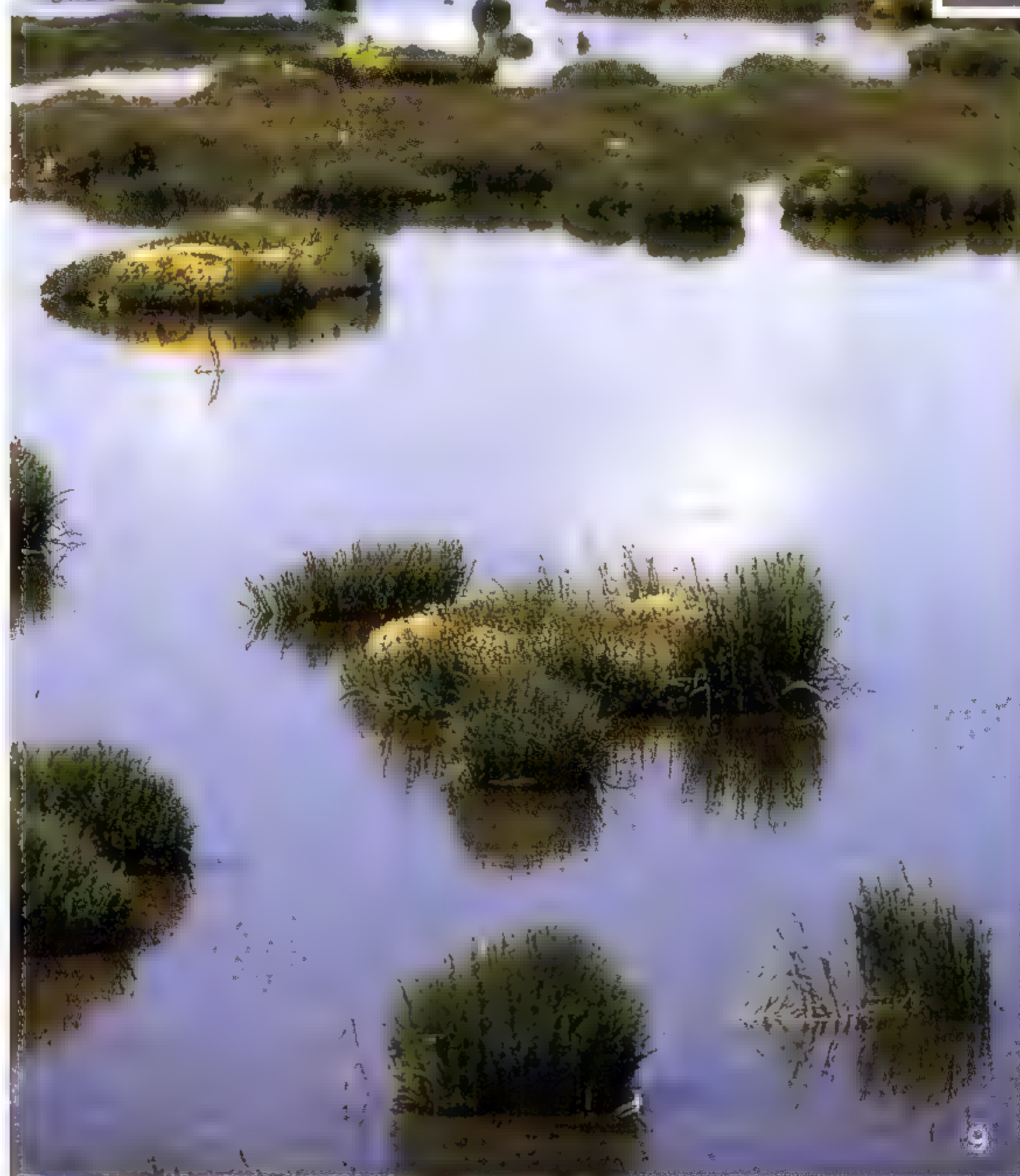




and "dog ears". Indeed, the flowers are an integral part of the grasslands, and "grassland flower" is a most appropriate name for them all. With so many thriving flowers there, Maqu's grasslands are veritable flower gardens.

Most of the flowers appear tiny and graceful. They either stand alone, or grow in clusters. And some of them, the starfish-like flowers, for example, cling to the ground. They are of multiple colours. The tiny ones are most delicate in colour, and the bigger ones are usually more gaily coloured. They are in turn pink, blue, red, purple, yellow, and green, and set each other off like a rainbow. There are also patches of large yellow flowers (at the horse ranch), as well as splashes of carmine (on the road to Luqu). They are deeply rooted in the grasslands and nestled by the side of blue lakes. In silence they bloom and wither, and compete with the clouds in the skies in a sort of beauty contest. Only sheep, cattle and horses come close enough to enjoy their pleasant scents.

1. A kind of flower whose name we do not know
2. Purple flowers dye the grassland into a colourful carpet.
3. Petals of this flower resemble the heads of cygnets.
4. This mushroom is so big and attractive, but it is poisonous and may even endanger your life.
5. This starfish-like plant also blooms in purple.
6. These elegant flowers look more like jade carvings.
7. Beautiful crimson flowers
8. A flower lover from afar
9. Ponds like this are another attraction on the grasslands.



An Ancient Monastery Hidden in the Mountains



Hidden in the mountain are groups of religious structures, and a river winds its way quietly through the mountain valley.

Unexpectedly, a great mountain chain shot up abruptly before us on the vast flat grassland. The mountain peaks, impressively magnificent and precipitous, were thickly covered by pines and cypresses, exposing only a few grey, rugged rocks.

Lunching Over the Boundary

More to our surprise, hidden in the mountains were groups of religious structures, including three monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism (or Lamaism) and an Islamic mosque. We found a small river quietly winding its way through the mountain valley. It is an important river since it serves as the boundary line between Sichuan and Gansu provinces. On both banks are people's houses and narrow streets. Many stone,

cement and wood-plank bridges have been built across this boundary stream.

We had lunch in a small restaurant. Hearing the water gurgling around, I opened the window and found that the entire structure was built over the Sichuan-Gansu boundary river. During lunch, we heard the local people chatting, yet could not detect any difference between the dialects of the two provinces.

Chancing Upon a Festival

We made our trip in the middle of the sixth lunar month and happened upon the local people's Langshan Festival. In early morning that day, the novice lamas of Langmu

Monastery got up very early to load things such as tents, iron cauldrons, wooden poles, felt rugs and blankets onto a tractor-pulled vehicle. They then climbed up and the tractor went up a slope to a quiet place covered by lush green grass.

By the time we were up the hill, many tents were already set up, and the young lama cooks were preparing the food. In no time, the appetising smell of mutton emitted from the cauldron.

While the young lamas cooked, the elderly lamas sat higher up the slope, looking amusedly at their disciples busying themselves below. Suddenly, we heard the clattering of horse's hooves and saw a man, wearing a brightly coloured cassock and a high-pointed hat, ride past. He went into the mountains accompanied by four or five principal lamas, also brightly dressed. We realised we had just seen the Living Buddha of Langmu Monastery. It was no wonder that all the lamas and lay Buddhists, old and young, had bowed to him obediently.

1. The mountain behind Langmu Temple is within the boundary of Sichuan Province.
2. Children collecting twigs for the Langshan Festival
3. Luxuriant pine and cypress trees grow on the slope where Langmu Temple is located.
4. Every morning, local Tibetan residents walk around the temples to show their respect for the Buddha.
5. Monks preparing huge arrows for the Bow Festival which follows the Langshan Festival



Langshan Festival

Langshan Festival, also called Fragrant Wave Festival in Tibetan, is held in the sixth lunar month, but the exact date varies. It was derived from the firewood collecting, picnic and camping activities launched by lamaseries in the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in 1710 during the Qing Dynasty.

During this time of high summer, the grassland is ablaze with flowers and greenery. If you visit the Sangke or Maqu grasslands then, you will see white tents and cooking smoke everywhere. In the festival, people from all walks of life — lamas, ordinary farmers and even government employees — will, without exception, spend a few days on the grassland. It is the best time of year to enjoy nature's creations. People sit or lie on the grassland, drinking from big bowls, eating meat in large chunks, singing loudly to their hearts' content and dancing wildly without restraint. Words and actions considered "abnormal" at other times would be allowed on this occasion. No-one dares ridicule others at this time.

Moreover, some local townships take the opportunity to hold trade fairs and sports meetings, staging Tibetan opera shows or concerts.



Monks and Nuns at the Labrang Monastery



Compared to the lamas, the nuns' lives are even harder: they have to rely on themselves for everything and abide by more rules.



On the northern fringe of the Sangke Grassland in Xiahe County, southern Gansu, stands a large lamasery, called Labrang Monastery. This largest learning institution of the Gelug (Yellow Hat) Sect of Tibetan Buddhism is composed of Wensi (literally, "listening" and "meditating") College, Lower and Upper Colleges for continued studies, Shilun College, Xijingang College and a Tibetan medicine school.

The Long Road to the Top

Generally speaking, the Gelug Sect monasteries attach great importance to the study of both the Theravada and Esoteric doctrines, particularly the former, which are thought

to be fundamental. Being the only institution to teach Theravada, Wensi College holds an important position at the monastery. Applicants here must be well versed in all Buddhist classics. It takes at least 15 years of study to attain the highest title Gexi, which is equivalent to "Doctor of Divinity". This means that the very few who accomplish this will likely be in their 50s.

Monastery students come not only from Gansu but also from the neighbouring provinces of Qinghai and Sichuan, and even Inner Mongolia. Our guide, a young man named Zhaxi from Zhouqu County in Gansu, had studied here for three years. He was preparing himself to enter Wensi College by

serving as a tourist guide in the monastery. Most students rely on their families for food; grain is either sent to the monastery or fetched by the students on their annual two-week home holiday. Students must do odd jobs for the elderly lamas or pay them for sharing their living quarters. Some elderly lamas also tutor them. For young lamas, study is about all they do. As the exams are all oral, wherever we went, we saw young lamas fully absorbed in reciting the sutras.

Six Years at the Nunnery

Only one kilometre from the Labrang Monastery, a nunnery sits on a spot near an old prince's residence. Lamas basically involve themselves in studies, but the nuns are the ones who chant the sutras. I was very interested in the nuns' lives. One day I met a nun and I cordially invited her for a chat.

Her name was Zhuoma, and, just like Zhaxi, she also came from Zhouqu County, some 100 kilometres away. She became a nun at 11 and came to the nunnery to redeem her vow at 19. She had lived there for six years so far. She had not had any misfortunes or unhappiness that led her there. I tried to understand how or why she could spend six years of her youth in the nunnery. When I asked if she planned to return to secular life, get married and have children, she emphatically said, "No." She explained, "I like such a life and I feel very happy here."

A Hard But Content Life


Knowing Zhuoma's life at the nunnery, I realised that, compared to the lamas, the nuns must have a firmer determination and be better prepared both psychologically and physically. Their life there is extremely hard and dull. Generally, nunneries do not attend important religious ceremonies; they do not have a famous living Buddha or scholars who enjoy widespread respect; and their nunnery does not have parishes nor donators. Few pilgrims would come to visit them. Therefore, the nuns have to rely on themselves for everything — clothing, food and transportation. They do whatever arduous work there is themselves, including building and repairing the houses. Moreover, they have to abide by more rules, such as not to chat with outsiders, not to show intimacy to males and

not to wear brightly coloured clothes. Even after they die, no male members of their families are allowed to attend the cremation ceremonies.

1. Baking barley to prepare food for the Langshan Festival
2. An auspicious touch: everyone wants a part of the ribbon that has been touched by the Living Buddha.
3. Camping in the wilderness near the Langmu Temple during the Langshan Festival
4. Labrang Monastery houses the most important school of the Gelug Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism.
5. A student practising drawing during his spare time



A Paradise for Holidays



In the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, there are four distinct seasons. It is not very cold in winter, and the summer here is comfortably cool.

It would be a wise decision to spend your holiday on the grassland in the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. There are several advantages to visiting this region.

One: Easy Access

It is easy to get to Lanzhou as there are many flights from major cities within China. If you arrive in Lanzhou by noon, you can get to Sangke Grassland in Xiahe County by bus the same day. The next day, you can easily get to Maqu Grassland by the Yellow River by noon. A trip to the Luqu Grassland is even shorter. In contrast, getting to the grasslands of Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Qinghai or Tibet is a much longer and more arduous trip. Thus, a trip to southern Gansu can save you time and trouble.

Two: Long Season of Luxuriance

The grasslands in Gannan prefecture have more lush grasses which remain green for a longer time. Plentiful precipitation in southern Gansu, particularly in summer, makes its trees and grasses more luxuriant, covering the land in pleasing shades of green. Moreover, at such an altitude and latitude, the grassland starts sprouting its greenery in late April or early May and only loses its colour after September.

Three: Comfortably Cool Summer

There are four distinct seasons in the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Although it is not very cold in winter, the summer here is comfortably cool. Moreover, there is a big



Tibetan Baozi of Southern Gansu

The Tibetan-style steamed bun of southern Gansu is also called Zhuohua baozi. Being shaped like an ox eye, it is also called Niuyan (ox eye) baozi. The dough wrapping is very thin and transparent. The stuffing is made of mutton and vegetables, whose red and green colours are clearly discernible through the dough wrapping. Fatty but not greasy, the baozi tastes extremely delicious.

While eating, you must first slowly suck out the oily liquid inside from the top before you bite into it. Otherwise, the liquid may squirt out, probably burning your mouth and dirtying your hands and clothes

When you visit a Tibetan family and are treated with baozi, you should count yourself lucky, because it means the host considers you a distinguished guest.



Translated by Z. Li

difference in temperature within a day. In August last year we experienced a temperature of 26 °C at noon, but when the sun had set, the temperature turned decidedly chilly and dropped down to around 12 °C. We thought that perhaps summer had gone and autumn had arrived, but in this area it is ordinary.

Four: Acceptable Tourist Facilities

This region offers acceptable tourist facilities. Apart from the two-star Labrang Hotel in Xiahe, which has standard rooms, most other counties have only hotels and hostels of

low standards. In summer, however, some places set up many holiday "villages" of tents on the grassland, offering lodging, dining and recreational services with reasonable prices. Although they do not have private washrooms, the unity with nature they provide cannot be found in any modern and luxurious hotels.

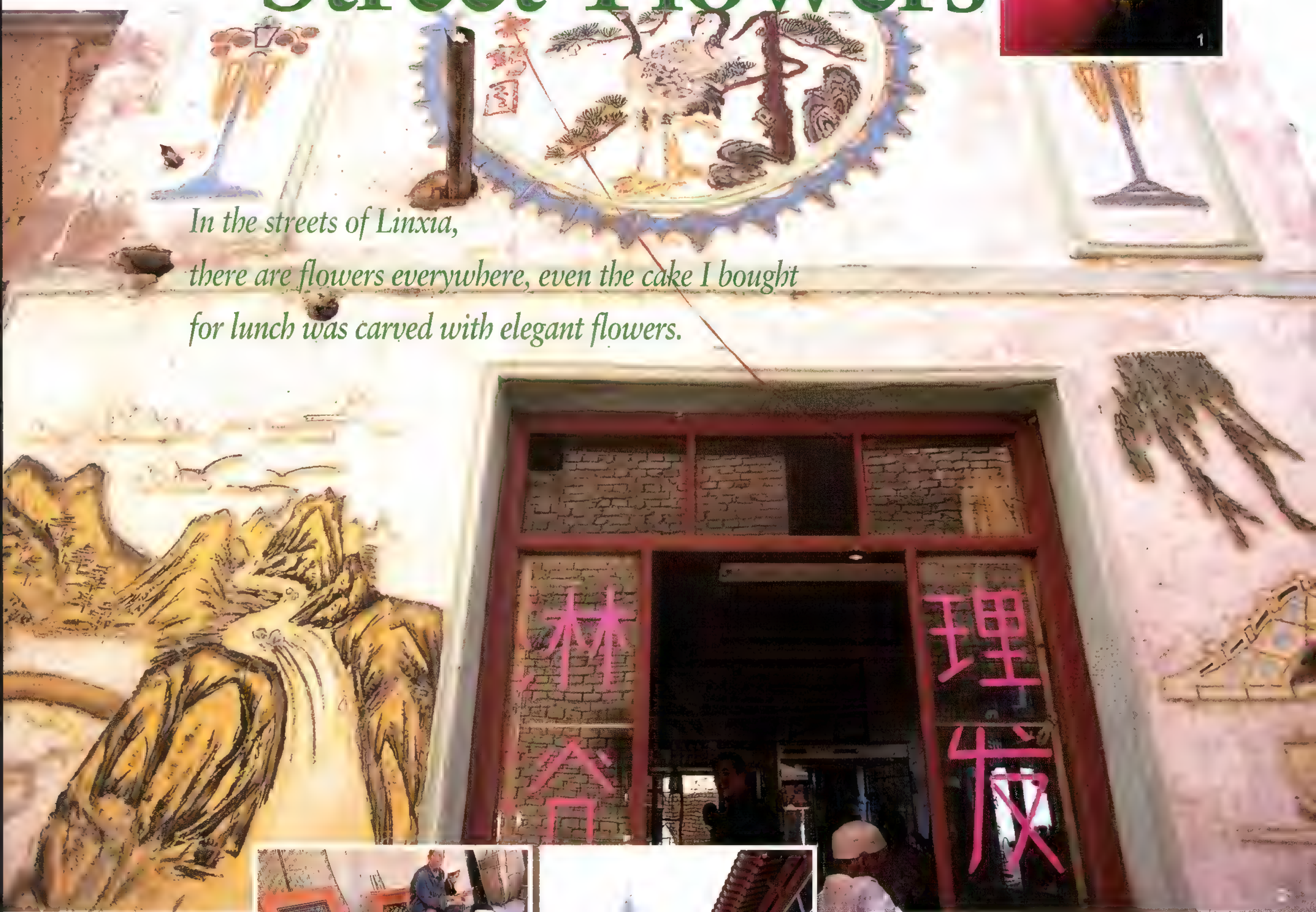
1. A holiday village of tents built by the Daxia River on the Sangke Grassland
2. The local Tibetans enjoy walking on the grassland.
3. Tibetan-style buns, a treat to distinguished guests
4. Holiday makers on the Maqu Grassland



Street Flowers



*In the streets of Linxia,
there are flowers everywhere, even the cake I bought
for lunch was carved with elegant flowers.*



When our car drove into Linxia Prefecture, the number of Muslim mosques increased. Whenever we passed by a village we saw a minaret or two towering over it. The minarets come in different designs, but they all look thinner than the pagodas in the hinterland. A minaret is a multi-layered structure in an exquisite design, gaily painted and decorated with carved bricks and glazed tiles. Figures are alien to these patterns, which are mostly flowers and plants.

The markets are filled with flowers. The outer

walls of restaurants, hotels, barbershops, grocery stores and what not, are painted with flowers and grass and landscapes. The walls are whitewashed and the flowers are elaborately done and well spaced. The tables and stools on sale in street shops are also decorated with flowers with loud colours and golden outlines.

Guests to a Muslim family in Linxia never fail to aah and ooh over what they see on stepping into the courtyard of a household, which is always filled to overflowing with flowers. Potted flowers and plants are placed everywhere — by the staircase, in the corridor and the sitting room, and on windowsills. The flowers with their delicate fragrance are supposed to keep the guest for as long as possible.

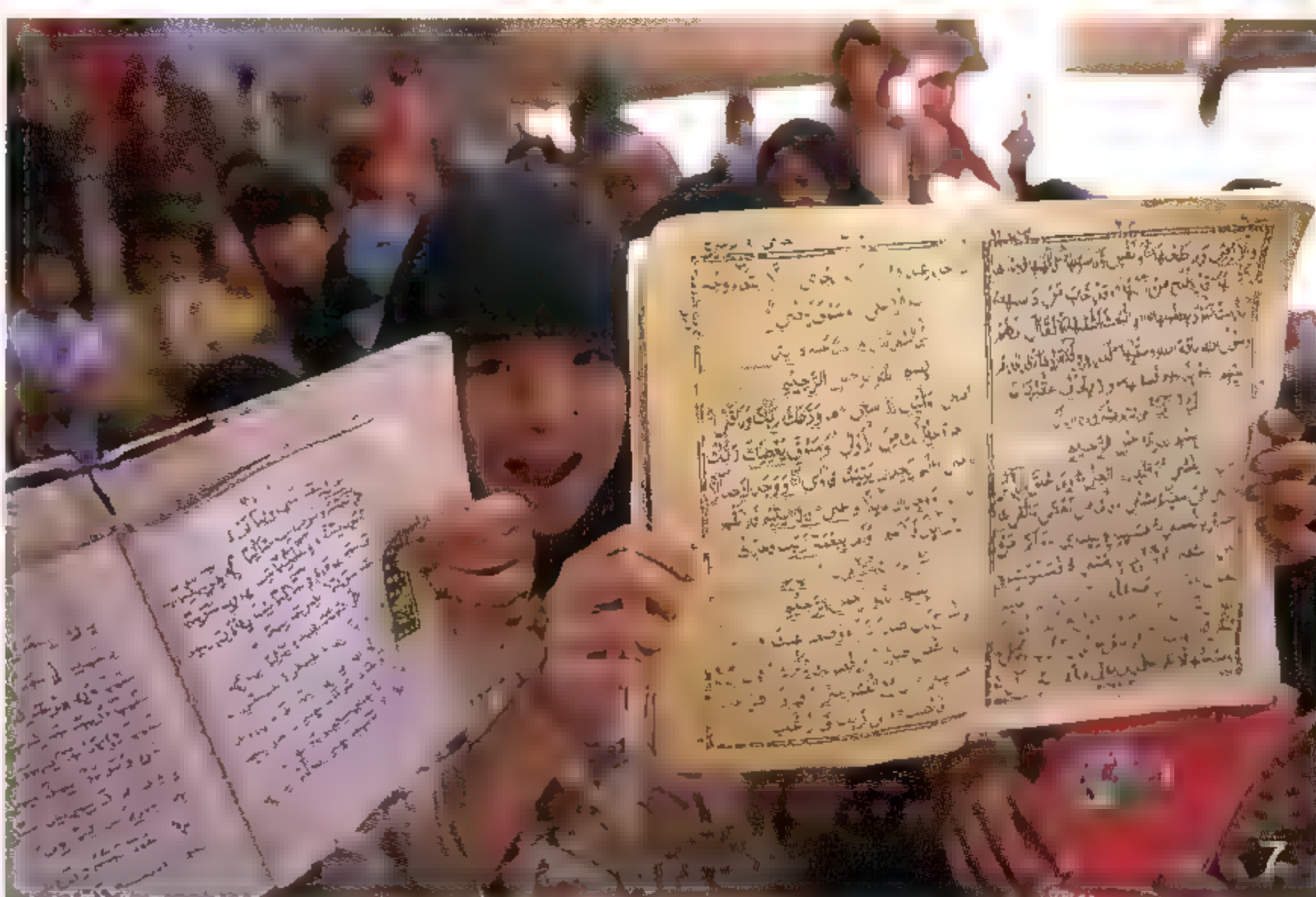
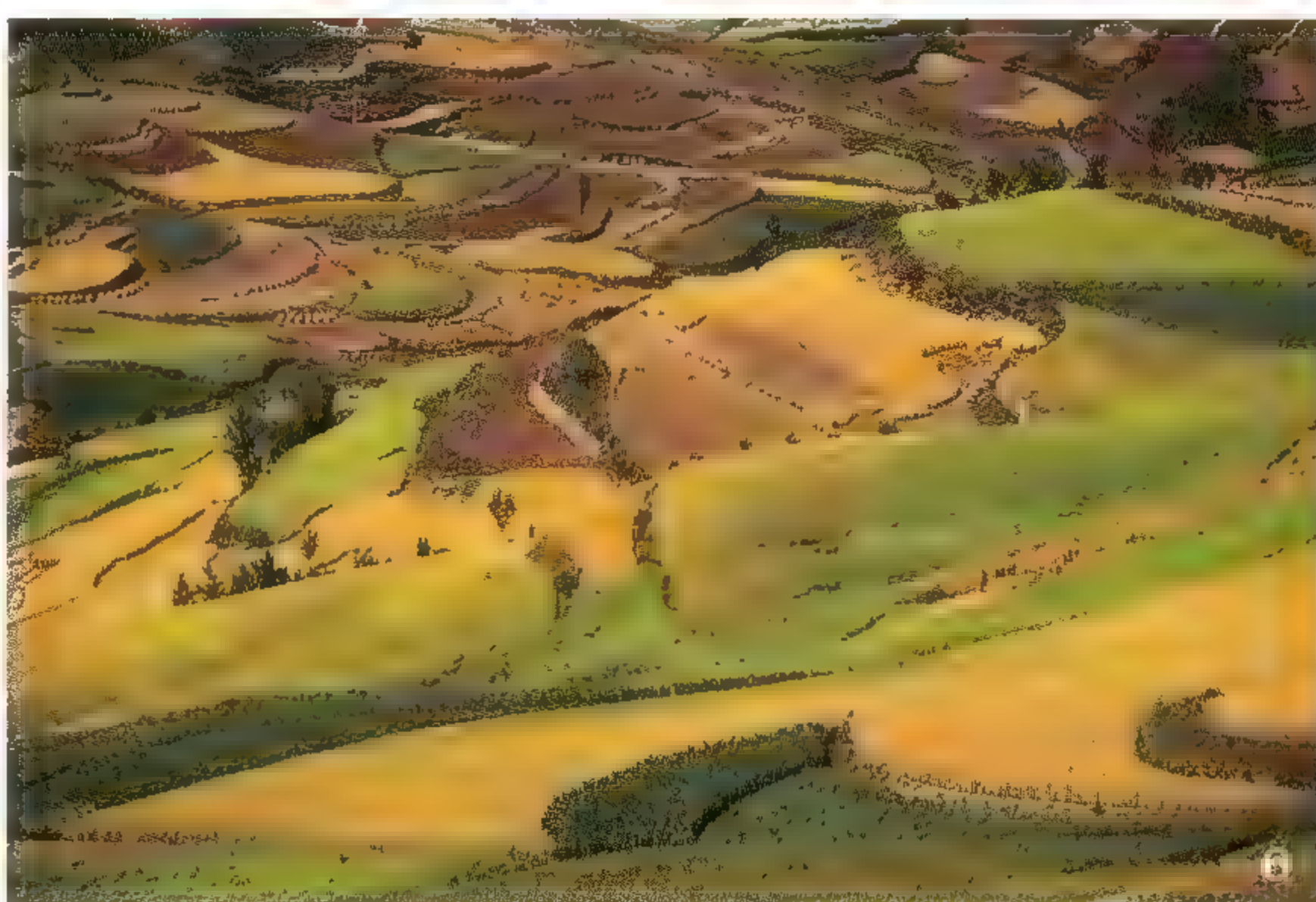
On weekends the square outside the western gate of Linxia is converted into a flower market, where nearly 100 rare and ordinary species of flowers are on sale. Men wearing white turbans and young women with their heads covered in green or black scarves pad along the market and carefully choose the flowers they like. Few visitors leave the market empty-handed. Expensive flowers, such as carnations, roses and lilies, sell for one yuan apiece, and the cheaper ones, such as chrysanthemums and calamus, one yuan for two or three.

Having feasted my eyes on the flowers, I went into a restaurant, where I was amazed to see the cakes I ordered were also carved with flowers. Each cake looked like an object of art. I held one such cake in my hand and for a long time could not bring myself to bite into it.

Capital of the Crescent Moon

In ancient times Linxia was known as Hezhou (River Prefecture). It is the only prefecture in China named after the Yellow River. It is also known as the Chinese answer to Mecca. The 800,000 Muslims — Huis, Bao'ans, Dongxiangs and Salas — make up half of the local population. Wherever there is a village there is an Islamic mosque; there are more than 1,700 mosques in the entire land of 800 square kilometres, of which more than 100 are found in the urban area. Nowhere else in China are Islamic mosques so congested.

The mosques of Hezhou are built in two different styles. Some are domed in a typical Arabian style, others are in traditional Chinese architecture, with carved pillars and painted beams. Despite the difference in architecture, each mosque has a strong vase fixed on its rooftop to prop up a sculpture of the crescent moon — the symbol of Islamism.



1. All these flowers cost only one yuan.
2. On the white wall of this barbershop are painted beautiful landscapes.
3. Without exception, furniture is also painted with flowers.
4. A mosque in the county town of Dongxiang
5. Linxia's flower market opens during weekend.
6. July is the wheat harvesting season in Linxia.
7. A pupil showing her Arabic textbook
8. The fantastically designed board of a dancing hall



Flowers Carved on Bricks



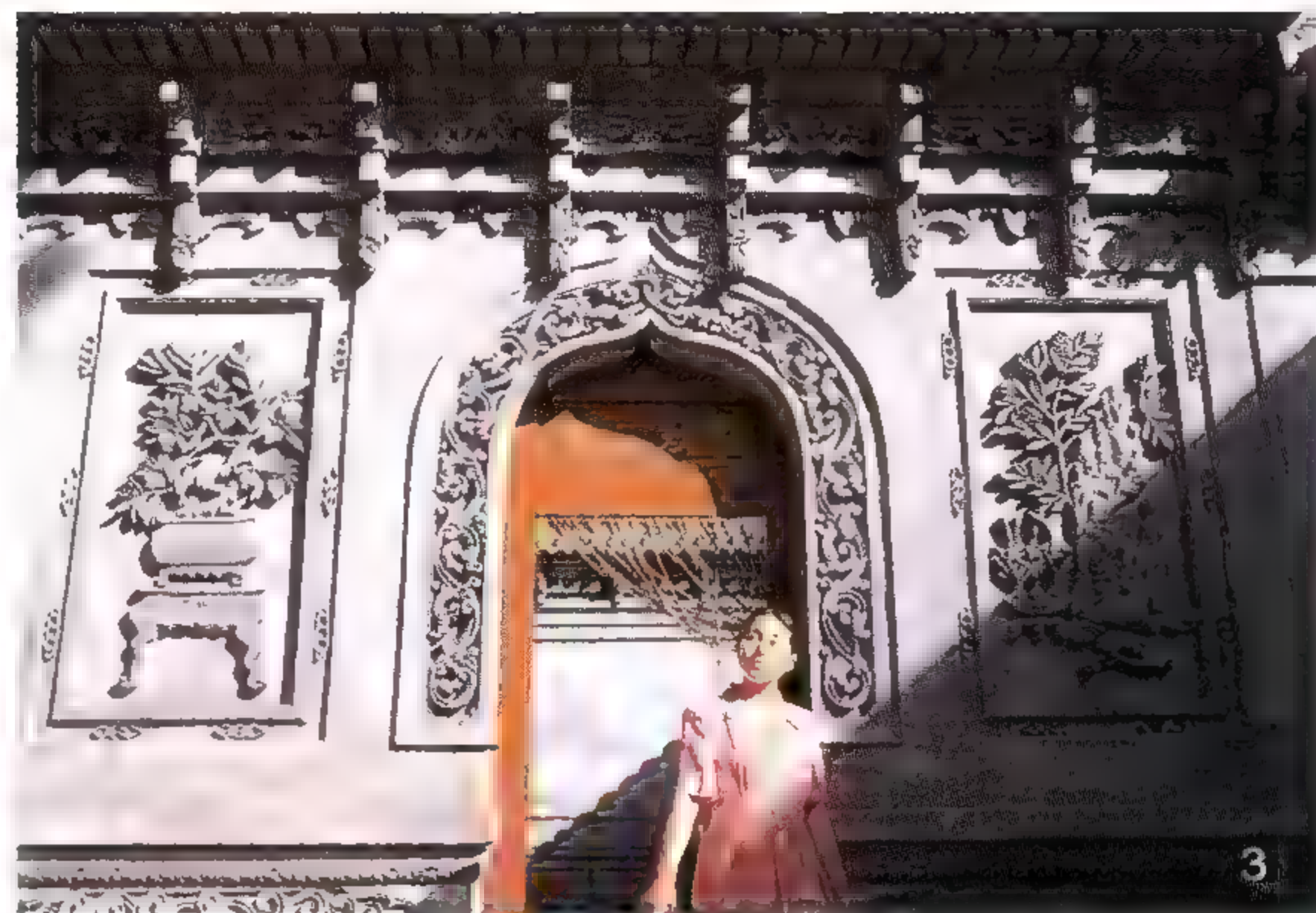
The gates, screen walls, courtyard walls, corridors and rooftops are all carved with flowers, peonies, hibiscus, chrysanthemums, orchids... which inspire a feeling of happiness in the eyes.

Linxia is also known for its brick carvings of flowers.

The Red Garden and East Palace Studio in the city are veritable museums of flowers carved on bricks, where gates, screen walls, courtyard walls, corridors and rooftops are without exception carved with peonies, hibiscus, chrysanthemums, orchids and whatnot. These flowers inspire a feeling of happiness in the eyes of the beholder, no matter which time of the year he visits the place.

Flowers: the Single Subject for Decorative Carvings

The Red Garden and the Eastern Palace Studio, which used to be the mansions of court officials, are not the only





Tea Ceremony in Hezhou

The tea ceremony of Hezhou is variously known as “nursing a bowl of tea”, “sanpaotai”, or “serving the eight-treasure tea in a lidded bowl”. It is believed that this tea ceremony originated in the imperial palace was brought back to Hezhou (today’s Linxia) by some natives who worked in the imperial palace. As many Hui in Lanzhou came from Linxia, so this tea ceremony was naturally spread to Lanzhou as well. Among the local people, the Hui in particular, “nursing a bowl of tea” is regarded as an important way of treating a guest. In local Muslim restaurants, serving this kind of tea is an indispensable ritual.

The bowls in which the Hezhou-style tea is served are mostly superb porcelains that are meant to be looked at and enjoyed. Favourite teas include Chunjian, green tea from Yunnan, and the black tea, Tuocha, from Xiaguan, Kunming, which all have a mellow taste with a slight touch of bitterness. And the tea is brewed according to a number of formulas. There is pure tea, known for its pure and congenial taste that has a faint suggestion of bitterness. Hence the name, “Bitter Tea”. With the addition of dried longan and crystal sugar, the brew is known as “Three-Fragrance Tea”, which becomes “Five-Fragrance Tea” with the addition of dried apricot and dates. Wolfberries and raisins are added to make it “Seven-Fragrance Tea” or “Eight-Treasure Tea”. Such a brew tastes bitter, sweet, and sour all at once, and is highly nutritious. The tea is also elaborately brewed. Only boiling water is used, and the first pouring of water is discarded to wash away the “dregs” for hygienic considerations, which is similar to the tea ceremony of Fujian and Guangdong. A bowl of tea can be nursed either in leisure or quickly. You may drink it in a few quick gulps, or finish it in a few hours. A waiter is always on hand to make sure your bowl is renewed with water after each sip you have taken. In that way you may experience the feeling of truly being waited on like a gentleman, or the life of the immortals.

places in Linxia with finely crafted brick carvings. As a matter of fact, virtually all the old houses in the city are graced with brick carvings of flower patterns that are equally exquisite in craftsmanship. That is why Linxia Prefecture is renowned as the Land of Brick Carvings.

Interestingly enough, not a single figure was seen among the brick carvings in the hundred or so houses I visited. This has something to do with Islamic doctrines. A Muslim does not believe in any idol, no matter what his ethnic background. That is why even in their sitting rooms and bedrooms there are no portraits hanging on the walls. Allah lives forever in the hearts of the Muslims.

The Deft Hands of the Hui

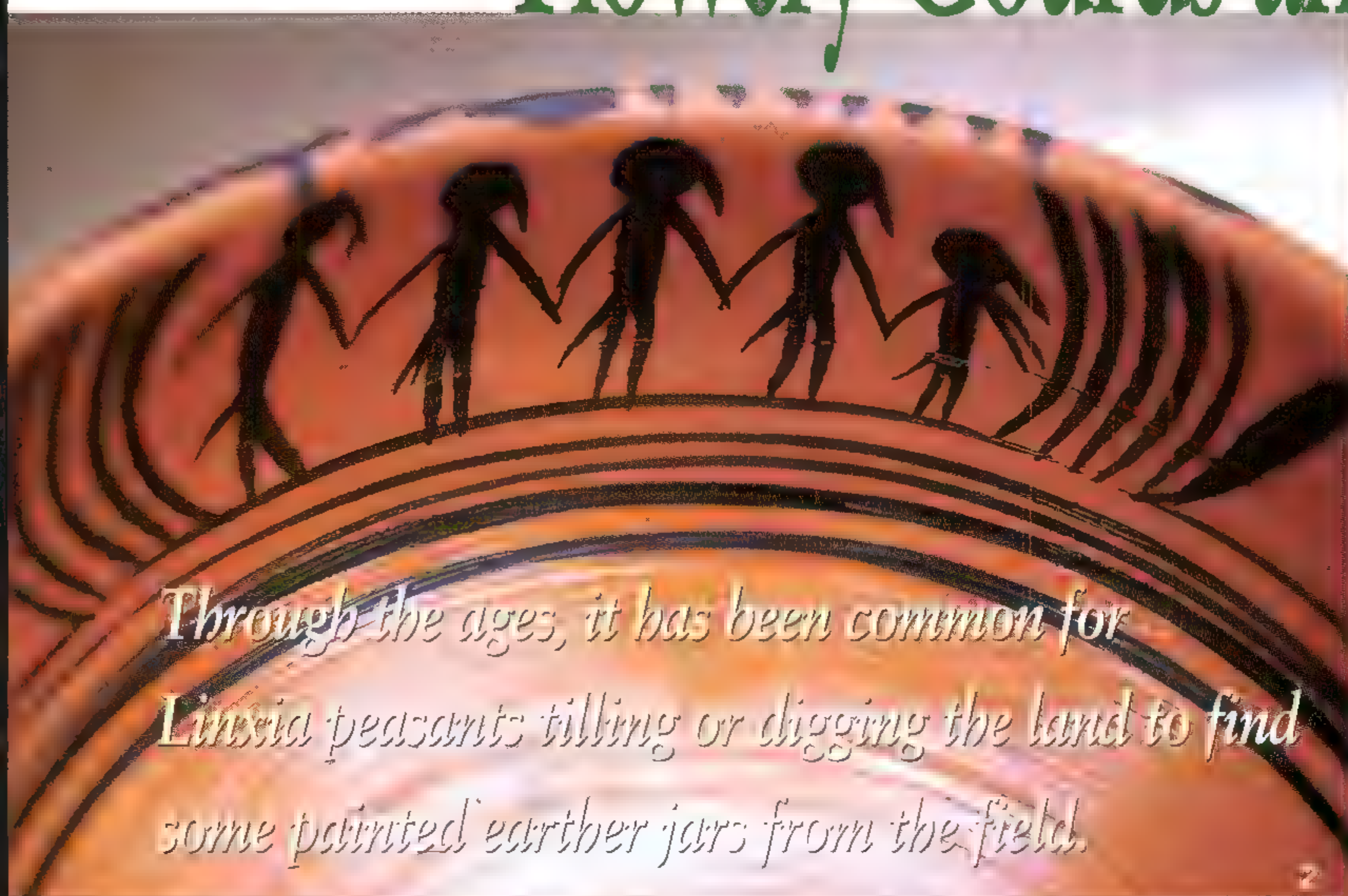
Among all the Muslims, the Hui are particularly known for their deftness of hand and smartness of mind. They do a better job in clay sculpture and brick carving than anyone else, and their craft, carried down through the generations, has been hewn to new excellence in the process. The brick carvings in the Red Garden, for instance, were masterpieces of a man called Zhou Shengpu and members of his family. Brick carvers in Linxia are also constantly renovating their skills. On the basis of traditional plain carving, they have developed high-relief carvings.

Brick carvings in Linxia are made in two ways: moulding clay or carving bricks. For the former, clay is worked into flower patterns by hand or with the help of a mould, left to dry in the shade, and then baked in a kiln. Moulded patterns are mostly bulky ones, such as dragons, phoenixes and unicorns, which are used to decorate roof ridges. As to brick carving, knives and chisels are employed to engrave a brick with elaborate patterns or pictures. Such brick carvings, which are generally used to grace gates, halls, screen walls and gables, are regarded as the quintessence of the Linxia branch of brick carving.

1. Lion figurines produced with moulds
2. East Palace Studio, the former residence of a warlord, is gorgeously decorated with both wood and brick carvings.
3. The exquisite brick carvings on the frame of an inner gate
4. The carvings on a screen wall are usually by the hand of a master artisan.
5. Fine brick carvings found in the rear garden of the East Palace Studio



Flowery Gourds and Earthen Jars



I would say the people of Linxia are more flower-conscious than being merely clever and deft. The gourds popularly grown in residential courtyards provide a pleasant scene with long vines, broad leaves and white flowers. During later summer and early autumn they begin to bear fruits, with smooth-skinned gourds hanging down from the trellises in a most inviting manner. Those gourds that have developed a vase-like shape are best loved, but the local artisans are not satisfied with their smooth skins and so they carve patterns into these gourds for decorative purposes.

Amazing 5,000-Year-Old Pottery

Visitors to the prefecture's museum are in for a big surprise: On display there are an impressive array of earthen ware dating back to some 5,000 years ago. Archaeologists attribute Linxia's painted pottery to the Majiayao Culture, which is a branch of Yangshao Culture. Some 5,000 years ago, the Chinese ancestors in Linxia were already building walls with rammed earth and thatching their roofs with straw and they had learned how to work clay into utensils, firing them in kilns and painting them with flower-and-grass patterns.

Through the ages, it has not been uncommon for Linxia peasants tilling or digging the land to find some painted earthen jars from the field. Some of the discoveries were delivered to the local archaeological department, some sold to collectors, others simply kept at peasant homes as grain containers. Even more discoveries have been made by the local government.

Want to buy one such painted earthen jar? It is not impossible. Because of the abundance of archaeological discoveries, some of the surplus which are not regarded as treasures are picked out and put on the market for sale. But if you want to bring one of these out of China, you've got to register with the local cultural relics authorities. Replicas, however, are everywhere and in a good variety, with prices ranging from 10 to several dozen yuan.

Husband-and-Wife Jar Makers

Those who are curious about how imitation pottery is made may choose to visit the Dahui Village two kilometres from downtown Linxia. In a tiny courtyard in the village lives Mr. Shi Long, former curator of the prefecture's museum. During a 1984 visit to Dunhuang, he saw many people copying the murals in the grottoes. Returning to his hometown he began to make painted pottery in imitation of ancient models. First he did it for the government, then he turned the venture into a mama-and-papa affair, in which his wife makes pots and he paints them with patterns. In a few years' time he has improved his skill and his business has been thriving ever since.

According to Shi, the making of pottery is rather complicated.

First, you have to choose the right clay. During the period of Qijia Culture, when pottery making was still in its infancy, our ancestors used the clay on top of the mountain where they lived. To make pottery of the Yangshao Culture, you have to fetch clay from the foot of the mountain, as people of that time did. Second, the clay should be kneaded and mixed. The clay is first be sifted and water added to turn it into a kind of dough which is then beaten and kneaded repeatedly until it is ready for use. Third, the clay is moulded into smaller utensils, or worked on a potter's wheel into large utensils or those of unusual shapes. Finally the utensils are polished, left to dry in the shade, fired in a kiln and painted with patterns.

An imitation of ancient pottery is made by soaking the newly made earthenware in a solution prepared according to a special formula and then they are put through several rounds of wear and tear.



1. Mr. Shi Long at work
2. A pattern painted on an imitation pottery
3. Gourds are carved according to their different shapes.
4. Jars with abstract designs
5. It is hard to imagine how primitive people made this.
6. Carved gourds have become favourite souvenirs in Linxia.
7. The deft hands of an artisan



'Flowers'—the Folk Songs of Linxia

The people of various ethnic backgrounds in Linxia are fond of flowers, whether they are grown in the fields, carved in bricks, painted on walls or etched into utensils. You would never imagine that there is another kind of flower that are not tangible — the local folk songs that are also called “flowers”.

These “flowers” are popular in Qinghai, Gansu and Ningxia, but the tune actually originated in Linxia.

Love Songs for the Young

The earliest form of such folk songs were developed by the Han and Qiang people living on the northwestern highland in ancient times. In the years that followed they were kept alive through the lips of local Huis, Dongxiangs, Bo'ans, Salas and Tus, who brought them to perfection and spread them even wider. Today, even Tibetans, Yugus and Hans in Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai are singing this genre of folk songs.

In Linxia, the flower songs are mostly love songs. It is only

natural for people in their flowering age to sing such folk songs. As befitting their name of “flowery folk songs”, they are full of metaphors which liken peonies, pomegranates, lotus flowers and magnolias to young women in love. One such song has this to say, “There is a peony growing on the flatland. It is easy to look at it, but difficult to pick it. You can do nothing but regret, if you cannot hold it in your own hands.”

Sing for the Happiness

Love songs in Linxia are classified according to their geographic locations, such as “Flowers of Hezhou” and “Flowers of Lianhua Mountain”; they are also classified



according to their tunes — there are actually more than 100 such tunes, such as the tune of the white peony, the tunes of the Salas and Bao'ans, the "big-eyed" tune, and the tune of horses.

These love songs are either narrative or lyrical. Some have a comprehensive content, but the others are made to be improvised. Everyone living in Linxia is able to sing a song or two. When they are working in the fields they vocalise a few lines to beat fatigue. When someone comes into sight, his or her lover sings a line or two by way of greeting. The solitary wayfarer is often in the mood of singing a song to dispel solitude. There are also songs to be sung to vent one's worries, or express one's happiness. Professional song collectors have visited the prefecture and sorted out more than 1,000 "flower" songs, many of which have been published in dozens of books.

1. Girls of the Tu ethnic group from Qinghai Province also come to the singing festival at Songming Rock. (by Minghua)
2. The area is full of people during the Songming Rock Singing Festival. (by Chen Huai)
3. People from Lanzhou singing at the festival (by Chen Huai)
4. The singing festival is also an occasion for relatives and friends to get together. (by Minghua)
5. Flowery balls are tokens young men send to their girls at the singing festival. (by Minghua)

Songming Rock Singing Festival

The Songming Rock Singing Festival is an affair that takes place from the 26th through the 28th of the fourth lunar month. During the festival, local Han people are seen burning incense sticks and offering sacrifices and libations in a Buddhist temple atop the Songming Rock, while young Hui men and women are all over the mountains singing love songs to one another.

"A couple of white doves kiss each other..." This is a song I learned to sing during my childhood. Only after I grew up did I realise that this was a love song to the flower tune. And there are many like this. One such song puts it this way, "The White Peony accidentally fell into the river. I rushed over and patiently picked it up. Then I walked my girl home along a broad road. Half hurriedly, half patiently I walked her into the distance."

The singing festival is not limited to young men and women. Middle-aged women are often seen challenging young men with songs. The singing competition takes place between two teams and everyone gets into action in real earnest.

The singing festival at Songming Rock never fails to attract the people living in the neighbouring counties. Local peasants come specially to sing. During my visit I met a number of song lovers who had come all the way from Lanzhou, bringing along their *erhu*, a two stringed fiddle-like instrument

One of them, a Hui, told me that the "flowers" could be sung in three moods — when you feel unhappy, in a good mood, or when you want to sing love songs. "If you want to sing a love song, you've got to do it in the wild mountains," he said.

Loitering on the mountain slope I bumped into a woman farmer who had come to open a restaurant together with her husband. She was picking firewood in the mountains while marvelling at the young men and women engaged in a singing competition. There were mixed feelings in her eyes. I asked her if she knew how to sing the songs. Smilingly, her companion told me, "If her husband knows it, he would surely break her legs." The wife, however, did not seem that afraid, when she told me, "If I want I just sing it, but it is rather boring to sing it alone."



Linxia, a Gourmet's Paradise



Northwesterners are rather taken to the delicacies of Linxia, where wheat food, meat, and drinks are prepared elaborately and in a good variety. Virtually everything is offered at the night food market at Southern Gate Square of Linxia, such as hair-thin noodles of tremendous lengths, dough slices as thin as a cicada's wings, and the "seven-flower noodles" in the shape of a sparrow's tongue. There are also such specialties as jelly gluten, mutton hotchpotch, handpicked meat, meat stewed in rice wine, fermented rice and Sanpaotai tea.

Jelly-Like Gluten

Niangpizi, jelly-like gluten, is a major delicacy of Linxia. In fact the prefecture keeps Islamic restaurants in Lanzhou supplied with choice jelly gluten. During my middle school years Mum taught me how to make it. First dough is washed in water until gluten is separated from starch. Then the gluten is placed on a large plate and steamed until it becomes a kind of jelly-like substance. The substance is then cut into long slices and seasoned with mashed garlic, salt, mustard, sesame butter, vinegar and chili. You have no idea about what the orthodox jelly gluten is until you have

taken a bite of it in Hezhou.

Upon learning that the city's best jelly gluten was made at 59 Xicheng Lane, we found our way there. True to its reputation, the jelly gluten business has extended to the third generation of the producer. Despite its tucked-away location, the tiny restaurant is crowded with patrons all day long. Every day the family turns a whole bag of wheat flour into jelly, which is snatched up at three or four o'clock in the afternoon. Not only does the family produce quality jelly, it has kept its houses spick-and-span and its courtyard well landscaped with greenery and flowers, with fish swimming in a pond and birds chattering in the trees.

Meat Stewed in Rice Wine

In a dimly lit eatery of a night food market, the cook was cutting a piece of well-marbled mutton into slices, which were then dropped into a pot of boiling rice wine. When the

meat's colour changed in the wine and the blood on it disappeared, it was served in a bowl together with the wine soup, and seasoned with sliced scallions.

Mutton Contained in a Barrel

Mutton contained in a barrel is perhaps the most unforgettable of all the delicacies I tried in Linxia. Handpicked mutton may be regarded as representative of Hezhou delicacies, but mutton contained in a barrel is definitely the best of all handpicked mutton. In the old days, pedlars would put piping hot mutton into a barrel and, carrying it on a shoulder pole, hawk it right in the neighbourhoods. Hence the term, Mutton Contained in a Barrel. The Mas living in Xixian Lane of Northern Street are best known for this dish. According to Mr. Ma, he uses only the meat of young sheep slaughtered on the same day and cooks it in soup that has kept boiling for more than a decade.



1. Wang Guoding serving niangpizi at his garden-like restaurant
2. Driving 30 kilometres from Linxia and then sailing along a river for an hour, you can reach the Bingling Temple Grottoes.
3. The "King of Coloured Pottery" stands at the lobby of the Hehai Tower in Linxia.

Tips for the Traveller

Air Flights

There are daily flights between Lanzhou and many Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xi'an. There are also flights between Shenzhen and Lanzhou every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Land Transport

The bus runs seven times a day between Lanzhou's East Bus Station and Linxia. The buses that set off from Lanzhou from 8:00 to 9:30 charge 11.3 yuan apiece. The 10:30 bus charges 18.8 yuan.

Address: 170 Pingliang Road. For information please dial (931) 841 8411

At Lanzhou's West Bus Station:

6:30-12:30: There are 19 buses bound for Linxia; ticket: 10.8 yuan.

10:30: There is one bus bound for Xiahe; ticket: 18.5 yuan.

7:00-12:00: There are four buses bound for Hezuo; ticket: 18.3 yuan.

At the city of Hezuo there are buses bound for Xiahe, Maqu, Langmu Temple and Luqu, with ticket prices at and above 10 yuan.

Lodging

Jincheng Hotel, Lanzhou: standard room, 280 yuan; Tel: (931) 882 7759.

Hehai Tower, Linxia: standard room, 120 yuan; Tel: (930) 621 7455.

Labrang Hotel, Xiahe: standard room, 240 yuan; yurt, 350 yuan; Tel: (941) 712 1849.

Friendship Hotel, White Conch Hotel, and Daxia Hotel in Xiahe: all charge 60 yuan for a room and 20 yuan for a bed; Tel: (941) 821 2611

August First Hotel and Wuzi Hotel in Hezuo: 50 yuan for a room and 12 yuan for a bed.

Government Reception House of Maqu: 15-25 yuan for a bed; Tel: (941) 612 1531.

Shouqu Travel Service Guesthouse: 50 yuan for a room and 25 yuan for a bed; Tel: (941) 61 2125.

Langmu Temple Hotel: 12 yuan for a bed; Tel: (941) 667 1086.

Langmusi Township Reception House: 12 yuan for a bed; Tel: (941) 667 1001.

Luqu Tourist Hotel: 50 yuan for a room; 8 yuan for a bed; Tel: (941) 662 1170.

Luqu Agricultural Bank Guesthouse and Post Office Hotel: 10 yuan per bed.

Food

Food is plentiful in Linxia, where most restaurants are Muslim. At food markets open in the morning and at night, there are more varieties of refreshments with low prices.

Xiahe, Luqu and Maqu are county seats, and Hezuo is the seat of the prefecture government, where there is no lack of restaurants.

In the streets near Langmu Temple there are quite a few Muslim restaurants and some Han restaurants, where food is rather cheap.

Car Rental

If you want to have a real good time travelling on the southern Gansu grasslands, you'd better rent an automobile. Rents at the Gansu Silk Road Travel Company are:

Toyota bus (22 seats): 4.5 yuan per kilometre;

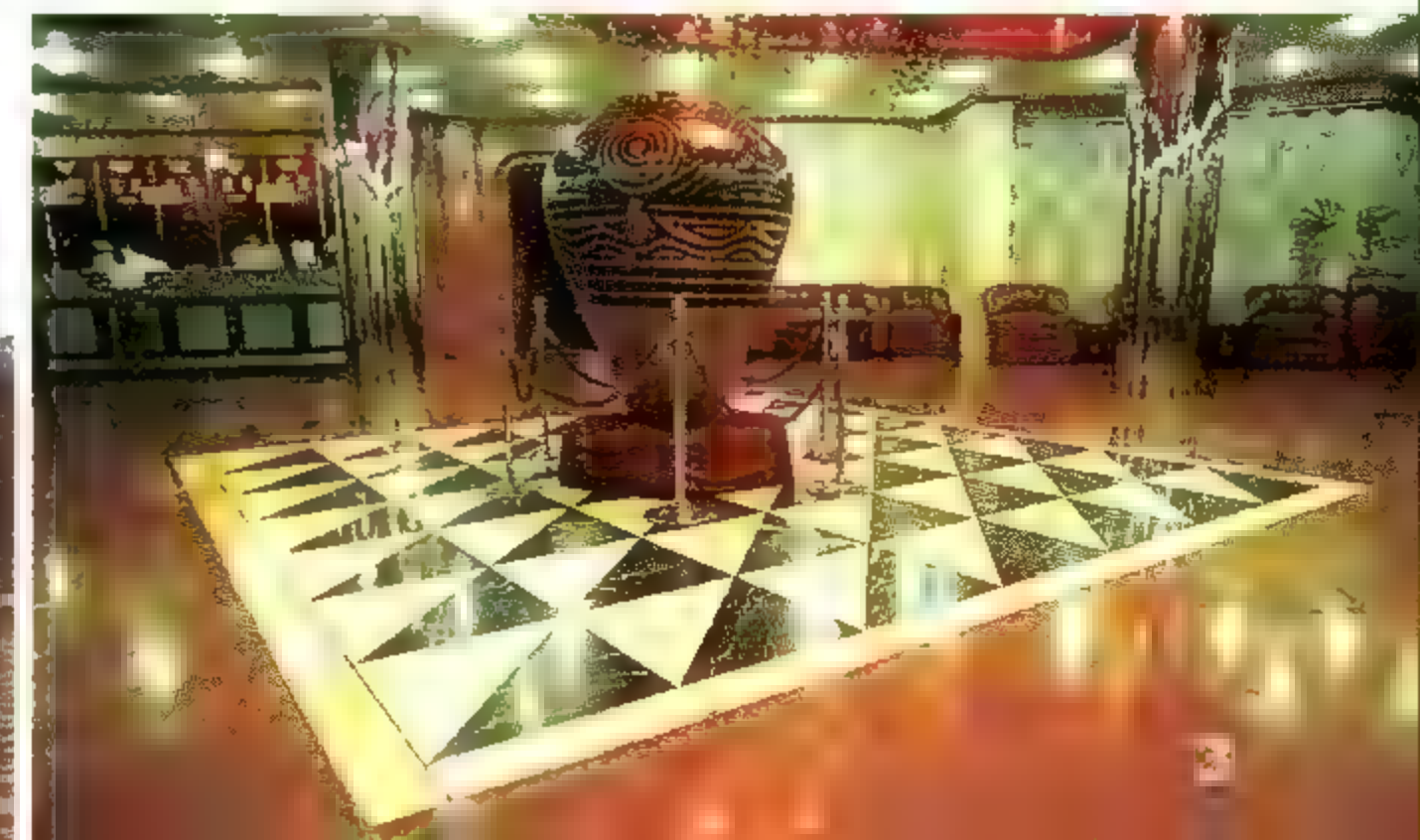
Mazda minibus (11 seats): 3.2 yuan per kilometre;

Nissan Cross-Country Jeep (9 seats): 3.5 yuan per kilometre;

Jielong Van (7 seats): 3.2 yuan per kilometre;

Daily rentals (vehicles with more than 7 seats): 300 yuan per-day.

Tel: (931) 882 3760, (931) 841 6638/6589



Pottery Figurines of Shiwan

Photos by Xu Zhenrui Article by Zhi Lang



In China there are five main places producing ceramics, namely Jingdezhen in Jiangxi, Tangshan in Hebei, Zibo in Shandong, Liling in Hunan and Shiwan in Guangdong. Merely considering craftsmanship, Shiwan's chinaware probably cannot compare with the other four. But for ceramic objects as souvenirs, I would recommend the pottery figurines of Shiwan.

Themes of Three Religions

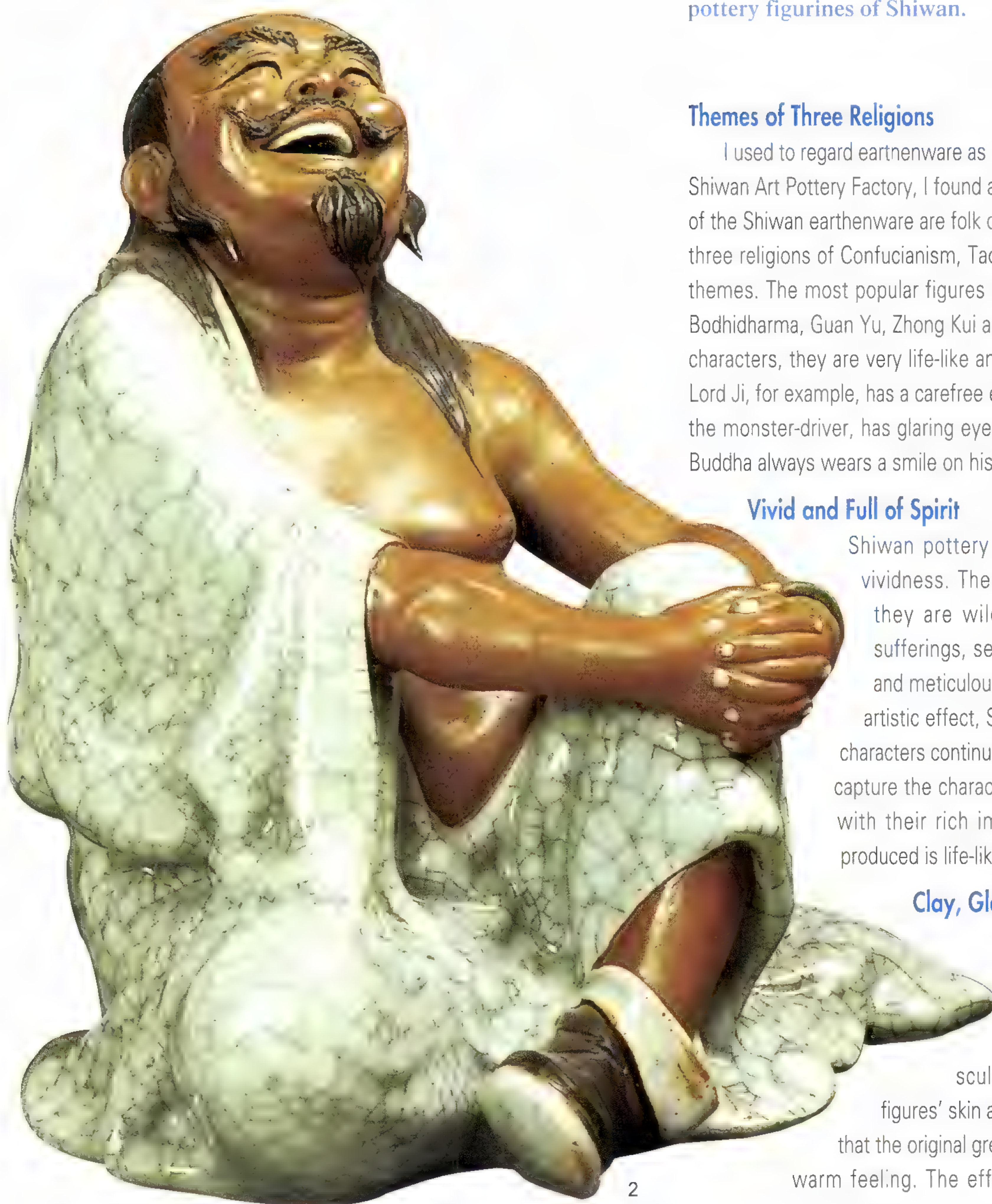
I used to regard earthenware as only household utensils, but at the Shiwan Art Pottery Factory, I found a world of Buddha and gods. Most of the Shiwan earthenware are folk objects, which most likely take the three religions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism as their main themes. The most popular figures are Big-Belly Buddha, Tathagata, Bodhidharma, Guan Yu, Zhong Kui and Lord Ji. With distinct individual characters, they are very life-like and full of fun. The unconventional Lord Ji, for example, has a carefree expression on his face; Zhong Kui, the monster-driver, has glaring eyes and grinding teeth; the Smiling Buddha always wears a smile on his face....

Vivid and Full of Spirit

Shiwan pottery figurines are famous for their vividness. The characters, no matter whether they are wild with joy or enduring untold sufferings, serious or laughable, are all vividly and meticulously portrayed. To achieve the best artistic effect, Shiwan potters study the different characters continuously during their creation so as to capture the character's features and enhance them with their rich imagination. Thus, each figurine produced is life-like both in form and spirit.

Clay, Glaze and Character

Using the right raw materials and glazes is the key in pottery making. The Shiwan clay has flat, smooth grains, good for sculpturing and line engraving. The figures' skin and animals' hair are not glazed, so that the original grey-brown colour of the clay gives a warm feeling. The effect of the characters' clothing,



headgear and footwear, in contrast, is achieved through various kiln transmutations. This shows the important relationship between the clay, glaze and character in making the figurines.

Practical Art Objects

Shiwan earthenware also combines decorative art and practical value in its pottery objects. The various animal- and plant-shaped flower vases, lamp stands and oil lamp covers are fine examples of the marvellous imaginative power of the potters in making practical pieces. One interesting work is in the shape of a man-made rock hill, with miniature figures, animals and towers. Some of the tiny figures are as small as a grain of rice.

The Shiwan Art Pottery Factory is a fascinating place to visit and see how earthenware is made. And at the same time visitors can buy and take home whichever lovely figurine they would like to adorn their own home.

1. Abstract works are also produced in Shiwan.
 2. The funny Smiling Buddha
 3. The life-like heavenly musician
 4. Pot with a peacock handle
 5. All Shiwan pottery figurines are made by hand.
 6. The pottery workshop
 7. Shiwan pottery figurines, small and exquisite, are unparalleled.
- (by Shi Tong)



TIPS

The prices of Shiwan pottery figurines vary according to size and craftsmanship. The best ones made by great masters range from thousands to tens of thousands of yuan. Small figurines two inches high are less than one yuan.



EATING IN CHENGDU

Photos by Mu Yao Article by Huang Yanhong

Chengdu is a city with the highest density of eating places in the world and where food is the least expensive in China.



Bean Jelly on a Shoulder-Pole in Tianfu Square at the centre of the city.

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Bean Jelly on a Shoulder-Pole in Tianfu Square at the centre of the city.

To the Chinese, "food is heaven". To the people of Chengdu, who like to eat and know how to eat, "food is even higher than heaven". There are more than 20,000 restaurants and food shops and stalls in the streets and alleys of Chengdu so that at any time of day and throughout the city every taste can be catered to. Sichuan's favourable climatic conditions and abundant produce have created a cornucopia of food resources. A culinary art with a long history and a large number of famous chefs have turned the city into a gourmet's paradise. Food in Chengdu is both delicious and inexpensive, refuting the saying "cheap in price, poor in quality". If you are passing through Chengdu, you must not miss the opportunity to try its delicacies.

Guo's Sweet Dumplings



Pockmarked Mrs. Chen's Bean Curd



Dandan Noodles



Whiskered-Mole's Dragon-Eye Buns



Zhong's Meat Dumplings



Lai's Sweet Dumplings



Husband and Wife Lung Slices



Long's Chaoshou



CHENGDU'S FAMOUS SNACKS

Chengdu's famous snacks occupy a pre-eminent position among its culinary delights and they truly live up to their reputation.

Whiskered-Mole's Dragon-Eye Buns

This is a snack named after the appearance of the chef named Liao who originated the meat bun more than 60 years ago. He had a mole with whiskers on his chin. His steamed meat buns look quite ordinary but are very special in taste. The bun is shaped like the small steamed meat buns of Jiangsu and Zhejiang but has preserved its Sichuan flavour. The dough is prepared with the best wheat flour mixed with pork fat, sugar and milk and the filling with best-quality minced pork mixed with seasoning and chicken gravy. Since the restaurant moved to Taisheng Street at the city centre, business has become even more brisk. It is frequented mostly by workmen. A dozen meat buns plus a bowl of soup costing only a few yuan is really a time- and money-saving meal.

Dandan Noodles

Dandan Noodles are typical of the "fast-food" snacks that used to be sold on the street.

The vendor used to carry a "dandan", or shoulder-pole, with a stove suspended at one end and noodles, sauce, seasoning and bowls at the other and, while moving from street to street, he would cook the noodles as he found customers.

The noodles are made very thin and boiled in plain water. The sauce usually contains chopped meat, green onion and pickled vegetables and tastes slightly peppery and sour. As the noodles match the popular taste, they have always been a favourite snack in Chengdu. After the meat is chopped into tiny cubes, it is heated in oil to allow the water in it to evaporate. Salt is then added, plus bean oil for colouring, which produces the golden brown meat.



Zhong's Meat Dumplings

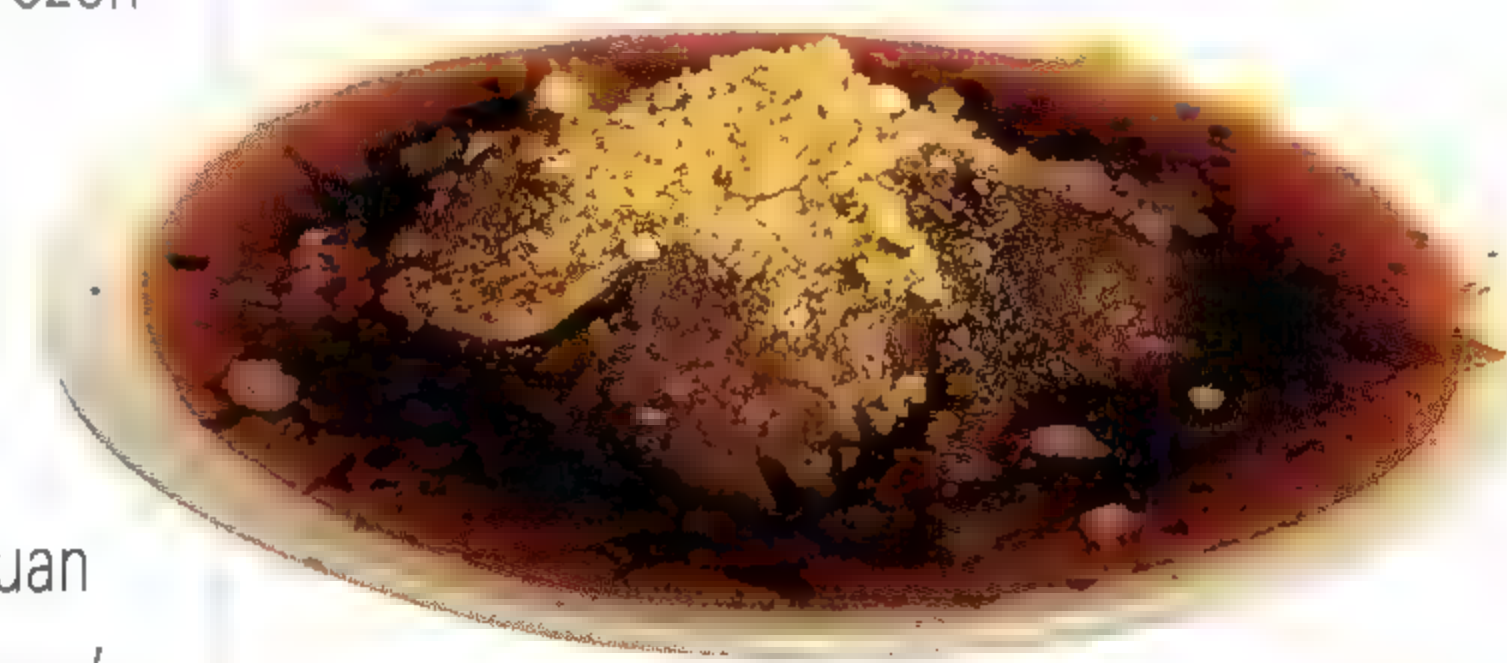
Zhong's Meat Dumplings became a famous Chengdu snack about 70 years ago. They are now also sold as a fast-frozen food.

Unlike the northerners for whom consumption of dumplings is an important family event, people in Sichuan eat them as snacks. Zhong's Meat Dumplings are known for their thin casings and tender and tasty fillings prepared from choice ingredients. The two main varieties are: Spicy Red Dumplings served in red chilli oil and soy sauce, which are rich in flavour and slightly hot, and the Clear-Soup Dumplings, which are not very spicy but very tasty and seem to melt in the mouth. The latter are very much favoured by visitors.

Husband and Wife Lung Slices

Visitors from other places do not know what "lung slices" are. This Chengdu snack was originally prepared from slices of beef, ox tongue and ox lungs. Since the lung slices did not look or taste good, they were later omitted, but the name remained.

The delicacy was first sold over 60 years ago by a husband and wife team who went from street to street, always together,



come wind or rain. Hence the touching name.

When a customer came, they would put the pot containing stewed slices on a long bench. The snack was bought by the slice and dipped in a sauce before being served.

They never dreamed that their delicious snack with its distinctive local flavour would become famous throughout China in a few decades.



Pockmarked Mrs. Chen's Bean Curd The Chen Xingsheng Restaurant at Chengdu's Wanfu Bridge was started during the Tongzhi reign of the Qing Dynasty. The management was later taken over by Chen's wife. As the woman had a pockmarked face, people jokingly called her the Pockmarked Mrs. Chen. In those days, porters often came to the bridge to take a rest. They would buy bean curd there and ask the pockmarked woman to cook it for them. As time passed, the bean curd prepared by her became known far and wide. By the end of the Qing Dynasty, it had become one of Chengdu's famous dishes.

Chen's "Prime Bean Curd" is distinctive in its Sichuan flavour: mouth-tingling, peppery, smooth, tender and hot. These are also said to be the characteristics of Sichuan women, who are fair and smooth of skin but peppery and hot in temper. The restaurant serving Pockmarked Mrs. Chen's Bean Curd has existed for more than 130 years. The seven generations of managers, except for those of the fifth and sixth generations, have all been women.

Most customers visit this restaurant for this special bean curd dish which is prepared with minced meat and seasoning. The bland white bean curd is spiced up with red chilli and chilli oil and looks most appetising. Those who are not used to mouth-tingling and peppery food need not feel dismayed. There are more than 50 other bean curd dishes, most of them not very peppery.



Lai's Sweet Dumplings

The history of Lai's Sweet Dumplings goes back to the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) when a peddler named Lai Yuanxin sold sweet dumplings which he prepared and cooked on the street. He did this using a stove which he carried on a shoulder-pole for this purpose. The sweetness of the dumplings matched the good nature of the man who made them. They were prepared with such consummate skill that they soon became famous. People began to call them "Lai's Sweet Dumplings". In the 1930s, when the peddler discarded his shoulder-pole and opened a shop, he named it Lai's Sweet Dumplings.

Although the character "Lai" also means "no good", if one tries the dumplings named after him, one will find that on the contrary they are excellent.

The best known of Lai's Sweet Dumplings are those with chicken fat in the filling. There are also other varieties, such as those with rose-flavoured filling or with fillings made of bean paste, black sesame, or crystal sugar and orange. The shop also sells fillings for dumplings. Its annual output is over 800 tons, which is enough to serve 8 million people.

Long's Chaoshou

Wonton is the common name for the meat dumplings served in soup. But in Sichuan, they are called chaoshou, literally meaning "joining the hands together". They are so named because when preparing a dumpling, one has to join one's hands to seal the casing, just like slipping one's hands into sleeves in the cold of winter.

The name Long's Chaoshou can be traced back to 1941. In that year the founders of a new restaurant gathered at the Nonghua Teahouse to discuss the name they were going to give to it. They borrowed the word "nong" from the name of the teahouse and called their restaurant Long's Chaoshou because "nong" (thick) and "long" (dragon) are pronounced the same in the Sichuan dialect.

Long's wontons are prepared with a variety of flavours. In addition to the dumplings in red chilli sauce favoured by the locals, there is also the hot and sour variety. But the most famous is one served in a clear soup which is neither hot nor sour.

Business has expanded greatly in the three-storey restaurant. Chaoshous are served in individual bowls or as part of a set meal according to the size of the customer's wallet. If one does not want to spend much money, one can choose individual dishes for a meal costing upwards from a few yuan.

Guo's Sweet Dumplings

Guo's Sweet Dumplings should be called "Dandan Sweet Dumplings" because, like Dandan Noodles, they used to be sold on the street by vendors carrying them on shoulder-poles.

The name derives from that of a restaurant proprietor named Guo, who originally sold the sweet dumplings at Chengdu's North Gate. He later opened an eating place in the same area to cater to his old customers.

The sweet dumplings he made had soft, white casings. Even though there is sugar and fat in them, they were not greasy. They were well liked by his customers, who soon began to call them Guo's Sweet Dumplings.

Guo's Sweet Dumplings with bean-paste filling are the most famous. The process for preparing the filling is quite complicated. The beans are boiled first and then ground into



a paste, which is dried by being heated in a cauldron. Sugar, fat and other ingredients are then added.

Guo's Sweet Dumplings Restaurant is located near the Temple of Bodhisattva Manjusri. Visitors can try the dumplings before or after visiting the temple.

A Suggested

Snack-Tasting Route

Basic requirement: Go out on an empty stomach.

Ideal means of transportation: A bicycle (which can be rented at any large hotel) and a city map. (One can also hire a pedicab.)

Basic expenses: 20 yuan.

Route to be followed: Go out in the early morning to the restaurant for Guo's Sweet Dumplings (1 yuan a bowl) and then visit the Temple of Manjusri; eat Dandan Noodles (1.3 yuan a bowl); Whiskered Mole's Buns (4 yuan a steamer); Zhong's Meat Dumplings about 100 metres away (1.9 yuan a bowl); proceed for 50 metres to Lai's Sweet Dumplings (1 yuan a bowl); try Husband and Wife Lung Slices nearby (5 yuan a small portion); cross the street and go 200 metres farther to Long's Chaoshou (2 yuan a bowl). You will probably be full by now. In the afternoon, go out on a street shopping tour to help digestion. Supper at Pockmarked Mrs. Chen's Bean Curd restaurant (6 yuan a small dish). You certainly need to order other dishes besides the bean curd for supper. There are, of course, other famous snacks in Chengdu. Only a few are listed above because of the limitations of space on the printed page and out of consideration for the digestive capacity of the reader. Anyone who has a good appetite can find out about the other snacks at any hotel. Also, almost every hotel serves whole sets of Chengdu snacks.

EATING HOT POT



Hot Pot is the "hottest" of China's culinary delights and Chengdu is the "hottest" place for eating it. If there is one dish that visitors to Chengdu should not miss, this is it.

Hot Pot is "hot" because customers participate in preparing the food. They themselves put slices of beef, mutton, tripe and duck's intestine in the boiling broth in the pot and, when these have been cooked to the desired degree, they are removed and dipped in a sauce. In the process, the customers' desire to participate is satisfied.

Chengdu's Hot Pot is known for its peppery flavour and the way it makes your mouth tingle. Ever since chilli was introduced into China from Mexico at the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it has been favoured by almost everybody in Sichuan. This is probably because Sichuan's quiet way of life needs a little livening up and because the climate is damp there.

One who is not used to chilli may hesitate at the sight of so many red chillies in the Hot Pot broth. But those who like it hot may add chilli oil to the sauce and find full satisfaction

when their foreheads are covered with perspiration after eating the hot food. A visitor eating Hot Pot for the first time may find his tongue burning with the spicy chilli oil and may have to ask for a cup of iced water to relieve it. Could it be true that the tongues of the Sichuan people are made of a special material?

The broth in the pot usually has ginger, ox fat, broad-bean sauce and tonic herbs in it. In the past, the same broth was used again by batch after batch of customers with the used ingredients being strained away each time. It is said that the oldest broth had been used continuously for 100 years. People are now more conscious about hygiene, and insist on having fresh broth every time. After sitting down at the table, a cautious diner may ask, "Is the broth fresh?" The most favoured item to be cooked in the hot pot is tripe, followed by soft bone, duck's intestine, rabbit's kidney, pig's brain and seasonal vegetables.

To attract more customers, the restaurants now serve partitioned hot pot. The pot is divided into two parts with an S-shaped partition, with peppery soup in one part and plain soup in the other, so that chilli eaters and non-chilli eaters can dine at the same table. If a diner finds the chilli soup too hot, he or she can switch to the plain soup at any time. As for drinking the soup at the end of the meal, the plain soup is far more savoury.

A Simple Way of Adding Up the Account

Chengdu's Hot Pot is coming in increasing varieties, such as tripe, chicken and fish-head hot pots. There is also a small hot pot served in the street and characteristically called "Tingling, Peppery and Hot" or "Fragrant Skewers" because meat or bean curd slices are attached to a small bamboo skewer, boiled in the pot and eaten after being dipped into a sauce. The eater can choose any skewer he likes.

When it is time to pay, the vendor simply counts the number of bamboo skewers used by the customer. Each skewer costs 20 cents. It is a simple and most efficient way of adding up the account.

SICHUAN SALMON BANQUET



Salmon from Norway is a novelty in Sichuan. The Sichuan chefs have now turned the imported delicacy into something Chinese and are even offering a Sichuan salmon banquet composed of a series of salmon dishes. I could hardly image how the fish tasted when it is cooked with mouth-tingling and peppery spices. It was even more beyond my imagination when I heard that between August and October last year, the 1998 Culinary Competition of Sichuan Dishes of Norwegian Salmon was held in Chengdu. Norway attached great importance to the event. A special consignment of salmon was shipped to Chengdu together with 25 government officials. Taking part in the competition were 240 chefs, who each prepared two dishes, one cold and the other hot, with their own ingredients. The result of the competition was a great variety of creatively prepared salmon dishes of distinctive flavour. The honoured guests from Norway were pleasantly surprised when they tasted the Sichuan-flavoured salmon.

To see it for myself, I paid a special visit to the Great Quaxing Restaurant, where the chefs





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were preparing a sumptuous Sichuan-style salmon banquet. Cleverly applying Sichuan culinary skills, they turned out several groups of dishes which I had never tasted before.

The dishes were each distinctive in flavour and complemented one another. Some of them were mouth-tingling and peppery, such as the Sichuan Peppery Steamed Fish Head. Some were multi-flavoured, such as the Exquisite Salmon Pagoda, which came in four layers and was prepared like a work of art. There were four flavours in the third layer alone: mouth-tingling and peppery, fish-flavoured, sweet and sour, and crunchy. Others were Sichuan in flavour but Guangdong in style, such as the Simmered Salmon, which tasted only slightly hot. There were also Salmon Noodles, which were savoury and slightly hot and had a sweet aftertaste.

The Sichuan salmon banquet, which consists of 10 courses (plus 10 bowls of salmon noodles and 10 salmon egg rolls), costs 1,246 yuan.



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SECOND SISTER'S RABBIT CUBES

Eighteen years ago, when I lived by Chengdu's North Drum-Tower Street, there were many stalls selling cooked food in the nearby streets. The cold tossed cubes of rabbit meat sold by a young woman were very tasty. My wife and I always went to her for them. Later, as her rabbit cubes became better known, she put up a sign, which said "Second Sister's Rabbit Cubes". Every afternoon, people had to queue to get some.

Not long ago, when I returned to Chengdu after having been away for many years, I took a walk along Wuhou Avenue and caught sight of the imposing facade of a restaurant. The sign on the building said "Second Sister's Great Restaurant". Astonished, I walked in out of curiosity.

It was the same "Second Sister", the woman who sold tossed rabbit cubes on North Drum-Tower Street, though she was no longer young since more than 10 years had passed. Her experience in building up the business was almost like a fairy tale, which aroused my interest.

Chen Yonghui is her name. As she is the second daughter of the Chen family, people called her Second Sister Chen. In 1981, when the factory where she worked was on the verge of closing down, she left, pooled a fund of 300 yuan with her younger brother and began to operate a mobile stall for selling cooked cold cubes of rabbit meat. She had no idea as to how business was to be run at first. She worked hard and sought advice from people everywhere. She got up at three o'clock in the morning to slaughter the rabbits. When heating the oil, she was often scalded, leaving many scars on her hands and arms. Knife wounds were even more common. In these 10 and more years, she had worn out more than 100 basins for

mixing the rabbit meat.

When I asked her how the name "Second Sister's Rabbit Cubes" came about, she told me that the original name was "Chen's Rabbit Cubes". One day, a customer threw in a slip of paper through the window, on which, he wrote, "Second Sister's Rabbit Cubes — a faithful customer." When the family got together, they all thought it was a good name and it has been used ever since.

Today, Second Sister's business has grown far greater in size. Not satisfied with

serving only a snack, she has recently pooled together a fund of 20 million yuan and built a multi-function restaurant which serves "Second Sister's Rabbit Hot Pot", "Second Sister's Rabbit Cubes with a Set of Snacks" and many new Sichuan dishes of her own creation.

Before leaving, I bought half a kilogram of rabbit cubes. When I tasted them back in the hotel, I found they were just as tasty as they had been more than 10 years ago.



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1. Partitioned Hot Pot allows diners of different tastes to eat at the same table.
2. The multi-flavoured Salmon Pagoda
3. Appetising both in flavour and in colour
4. Chefs at the Great Quanxing Restaurant preparing Sichuan salmon dishes
5. Second Sister who sold tossed rabbit cubes on the street 18 years ago now owns her own restaurant.
6. Second Sister's Restaurant offers a new-style banquet set, which includes six cold courses and 11 hot courses and costs 480 yuan.



6

SITTING IN A TEAHOUSE

ENJOYING CHENGDU'S LEISURELY WAY OF LIFE

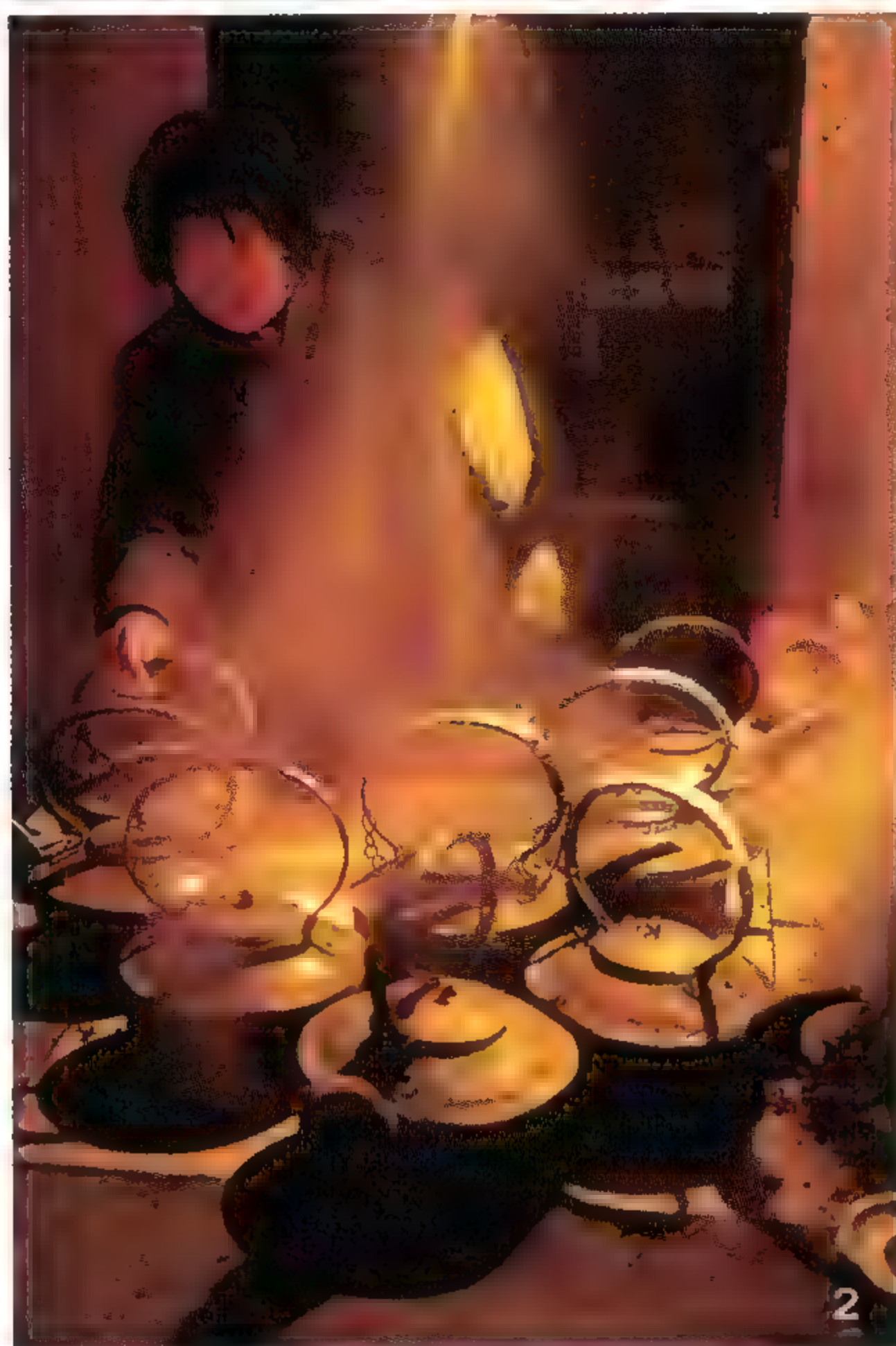


Chengdu is known as "the most leisurely city". Sitting in a teahouse is one aspect of its leisurely way of life.

There are all kinds of teahouses lining Chengdu's streets and alleys, and in parks and squares. People in Chengdu go to a teahouse usually not to quench thirst but more likely to meet friends, talk about business, while away the time or satisfy "the craving for tea".

Drinking tea in a teahouse is an interesting pastime for people in Chengdu. They often come in threes or fours. When they sit down on the creaking bamboo chairs, they will usually shout to the waiter, "Third Scented (Scented tea of the third grade)." The waiter will immediately come to the table with tea-cups in one hand and a pot of boiling water in the other. After placing the tea cups in front of each of the customers and tea-leaves in each cup, he will raise high the pot and skilfully pour hot water into each cup just to the rim.

Sitting in a teahouse, you can really enjoy your time. After a while, a man with a set of small tools will come to you and offer to clean your ears, which costs only a few dozen cents. People in Sichuan call this service "a small pleasure". There are also those who offer to massage your back, polish your shoes or sell newspapers to you. As for the other tea drinkers, you will see them either talking eloquently or gently sipping their tea or eating melon seeds. Wave after wave of people's conversation wafts across the room to you. It really makes you feel envious to see





Tips for the Traveller

Transport:

There are direct flights from major Chinese cities, including Hong Kong, to Chengdu every day. (See Executive's Memo in last issue) Taxi fares in Chengdu are 1.20-1.40 yuan per kilometre.

Accommodation:

Jinjiang Hotel (five-star): Tel: 558 2222; Add: 36, Section 2, Renmin Road South.

Minshan Hotel (four-star): Tel: 558 3333; Add: 55, Section 2, Renmin Road South.

Great Quanying Hotel (three-star): Tel: 625 9988; Add: 68, Section 2, Renmin Road Central.

Dining:

There are two types of Hot Pot: Self-service or a la carte at the average price of 30-50 yuan per person. A set of snacks costs less than 20 yuan. Price for Sichuan cuisine is determined by the dishes ordered, which differ greatly in price. As food is inexpensive in Chengdu, a rich dinner generally costs about 40 yuan per person.

Old-style teahouses are inexpensive. A cup of "Third Scented" tea costs 5 yuan. (Prices at some places are slightly higher.) Prices are higher at new-style tea pavilions. For example, a cup of tea at Seven Cups of Tea costs 20-40 yuan. Price for Gongfu tea is even higher, at 68-128 yuan.



that nobody seems to be in a hurry.

The old-fashioned teahouses are visited by many frequent customers who come in the morning and leave before nightfall, paying five yuan for a cup of "Third Scented" and endless refills and 50 cents for a newspaper.

The new-style tea pavilions, which have sprung up like bamboo shoots after rain in the principal streets and business quarters of the city, are no longer in traditional character, but they have their own customers. There, business negotiations and meetings between prominent people or lovers are conducted in a quiet corner which cannot be found in the noisy old-fashioned teahouses. The new-style tea pavilions, elegantly and sometimes gorgeously decorated and equipped with central heating in winter and air-conditioning in summer, are far more acceptable as far as comfort is concerned. As the price for the tea is much higher there, they are not visited by many ordinary people.

The old-fashioned teahouses are now being gradually replaced by modern tea pavilions, just as the one-storey houses in the city are being replaced by tall buildings. The leisurely style of the old teahouses, however, can never be replaced.

1. The old-fashioned teahouses are always crowded. (by Shi Baoxiu)
2. An efficient stove (by Chen Jin)
3. Sipping tea while listening to the birds in a teahouse is an enjoyable pastime. (by Chen Jin)
4. The Crane's Cry Tea Garden in the People's Park (by Chen Jin)
5. The tea pavilion named "Seven Cups of Tea"
6. Customers find their quiet corner in new-style teahouses.
7. An elegantly decorated tea shop
8. A teahouse waiter at work

LIFE IN A RURAL OPERA TROUPE

Photos & article by Wu Shuijin

By chance, I came across a rural opera troupe called Xianyou Fengming Opera Troupe from Xianyou County, Fujian, and stayed with them for six days. Their enthusiasms in life and devotion to the theatrical art deeply moved me.

All the programs the troupe stages are from the Puxian Opera, a very old opera derived from Nanxi (Southern Opera), which itself originated in the 13th century when the Song Dynasty

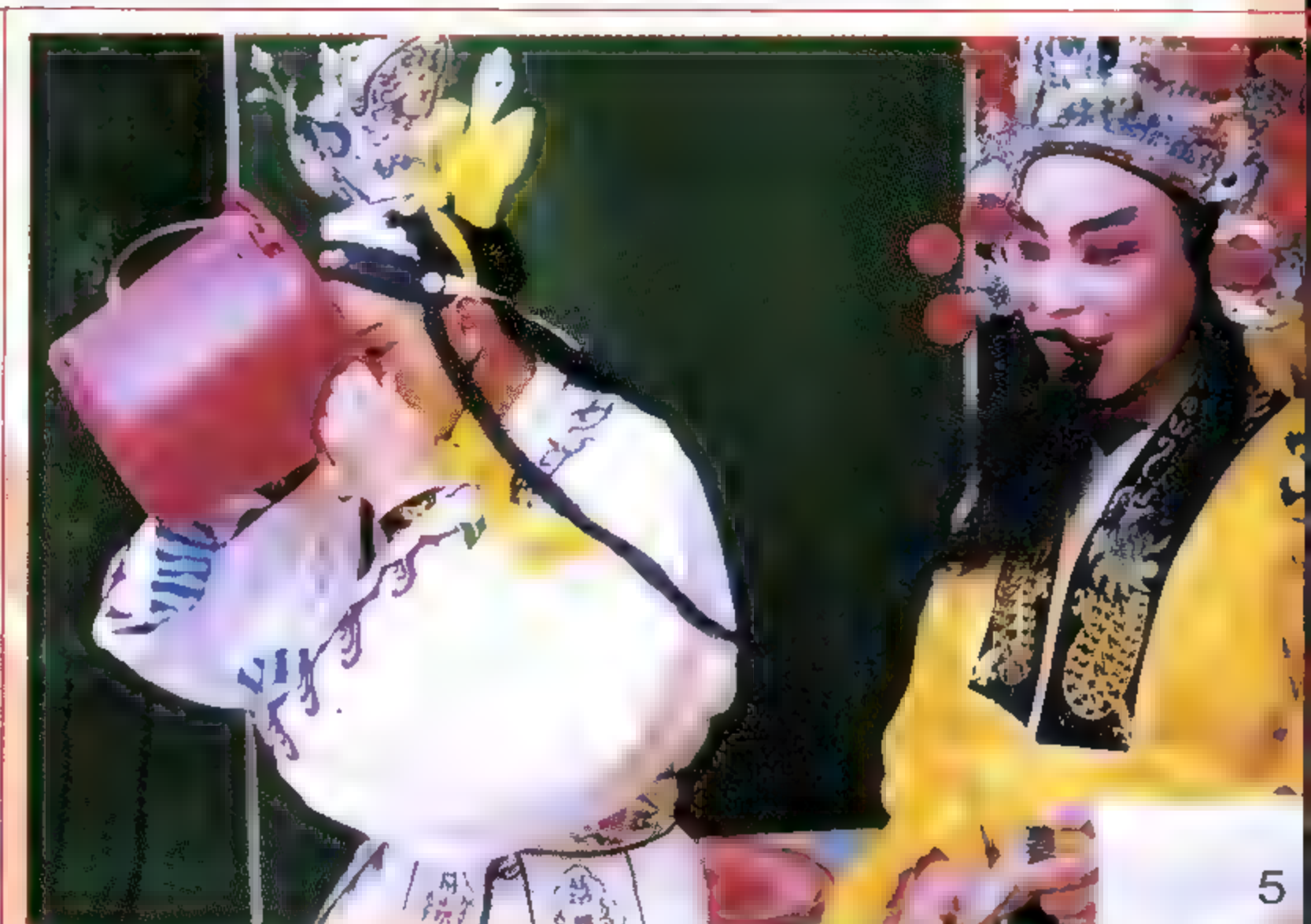
(960-1279) was replaced by the Yuan Dynasty. For over 900 years, Puxian Opera has remained a major performing art in southern China and an important cultural and recreational activity of the local people.

When Nanxi spread to Fujian, it gradually merged with the local folk lyrics to become the Puxian Opera that is popular in the Putian and Xianyou region. Over time, Nanxi almost disappeared, yet its remnant glory can be found in



Puxian Opera. One traditional program of Nanxi, *Chen Guangrui*, is now only staged by the Lisheng Opera Troupe of Xianyou County. The opera has been kept in its original form, including the singing, stage costumes, and movements, in addition to the





beating of drums and gongs. Though a small local opera troupe, Lisheng is famous in the country. In the 1950s, when it staged *After Reunion* in Beijing, it was hailed as "a world-class modern tragedy". In the 1970s, the troupe performed *Chuncao Outwits a Court Official*. Again a great success, the opera became so popular that it was adapted to many different opera forms.

This Fengming Opera Troupe is the oldest one of the six from Bangtou Town

of Xianyou County. It consists of 40 local farmers, who travel together with their families. Normally, they give two performances a day, totalling over 600 performances a year. For each one, they get roughly 800 yuan, but transport and meal expenses absorb most of it. Fortunately, little investment is needed and about 20,000 yuan covers all the costs for stage props, lights, and costumes as well as musical instruments such as *erhu* (two-stringed fiddle), dulcimer, gongs, drums and cymbals.

The members of the troupe are paid according to their roles. Usually, the principal male and female role players get two or three times as much as an ordinary actor. Apprentices who recently joined have no pay nor any meal subsidy. Only after one year's training will they earn some pocket money. The young actors and actresses are mostly troupe members' children

who began learning opera singing two decades ago, at the age of eight or nine. They did not go to school but would simply memorise the lines in Puxian dialect. Nowadays apprentices come from outside the troupe as well and only children who finished primary school are accepted. However, the stage life is hard and short for an opera singer; it ends at 45 for actors and 40 for actresses.

Nevertheless, the members of the Xianyou Fengming Opera Troupe are very earnest in their performances, regardless of audience size and pay. From my time with them, I can say that they subsist on the opera and take the opera as their life. This perhaps is the fundamental reason why an old performing art has survived so many generations.

What appeals to me most is their simple life behind the stage. Like the Gypsies, they wander along an endless road, each carrying a time-worn wooden box, seeking their dreams.

Translated by Zg. Li



1. Will these children growing up backstage become opera singers?
2. Husband and wife, a scene from an opera performance
3. Knitting for her child and husband
4. It takes only 15 minutes for an actor to get himself ready for the performance.
5. Off stage: drinking from a bucket
6. Despite the rainy weather, the performance is on.



Escaping the Summer Heat in China

Where should you go to escape the summer heat? Of course, "high" is the best choice, as the saying goes:

"The higher you go, the colder it gets." The word "high" here has two connotations.

One refers to latitude, thus meaning that northern China is naturally cooler than the south.

And the second refers to sea level, which usually means that around 1,000 metres above sea level, you will feel the coolness.

An ideal choice for a summer holiday, therefore, is on famous mountains, or on well-known beaches in northern China,

for they are not only scenic wonders, but are also fairly convenient in terms of transportation, lodging and food.

Here we introduce some of the less common and even unknown summer resorts, along with the traditional places.

HIGHLAND SITES

Scenic spots in Tibet, though definitely cool, are not included here because a summer vacation is usually for coolness as well as for leisure, and a trip to Tibet is too arduous

Kanbula Forest Park

Located in Guide County in east Qinghai Province, it embraces rivers, lakes, tall mountains and virgin forests. Most of the mountains, with peaks of spectacular shapes, are of the Danxia landscape. The Lijiaxia Hydroelectric Power Station, one of the several Yellow River power stations, is right in the park.

Climate: Summer temperatures average 15 °C; at noon it can be 26 °C. Though mostly dry with blue sky drifting white clouds, occasional showers may happen.

Transport: There are many flights from big Chinese cities to Xining, from where buses go to the park; from Lanzhou a train goes to Xining in four hours.

Lodging and food: Both the park's two-star hotels, Lijiaxia and Power Plant, offer rooms 120 yuan or more a night. High in the mountains are various tents and cabins at 100 yuan. Food services are also very convenient.

The red Danxia terrain is a typical feature of Kanbula. (by Liu Hui)

Tents of a highland holiday village (by Liu Hui)

Mengda Heavenly Lake Scenic Zone

Established within Xunhua County in east Qinghai Province, the zone is fondly referred as the "Tropics on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau". Bordering Jishi Gorge on the Yellow River, Mengda Mountain is densely wooded with more than 560 kinds of plants, including natives of the polar, temperate and tropical zones. The Mengda Heavenly Lake is on the mountain top at 2,000 metres of altitude. The lake's water is so clear that its 20-metre-deep bottom is clearly visible. A two- or three-day stay by this lake makes a most pleasant holiday.

Climate: Summer temperatures average 16-26 °C. It is mostly dry with occasional showers.

Transport: Buses cover the 220 kilometres between Xining and Xunhua in about four hours. From Xunhua buses go to the lakeside.

Lodging and food: There are holiday cabins in the woods at the lakeside; the Xunhua County Guesthouse and Jiaotong Hotel have rooms with rates from 20 to 120 yuan per night. Restaurants in scenic zone serve local delicacies.

North Hill National Forest Park

The park, 70 kilometres northeast of Huzhu, the county seat of the Huzhu Tu Autonomous County, is home to numerous species of wild plants and wildlife. The Tu people entertain visitors with folk songs and dance performances. The graceful North Hill is part of Daban Mountain.

Climate: Summer temperatures average 12-27 °C. It is dry with very little rain.

Transport: Buses travel between the Dongguan Station of Xining and the Huzhu county seat, from where minibuses go to North Hill. The entire trip takes about four hours.

Lodging and food: Inside the park there are the Park Hostel, Shilong Mountain Villa and Tent Hotel with rates starting from 80 yuan per night. These hotels are complete with restaurants and entertainment facilities.

Qinghai Lake

The lake is in the northeast of Qinghai Province, 150 kilometres from its capital, Xining. At 3,200 metres above sea level, it is China's largest salt-water lake. In summer, it is a haven for birds, while patches of blossoming rape flowers around it add beauty to the scenery.

Climate: The average summer temperature is around 10 °C; it may reach 22 °C at noon, and drop to 2 °C at night even in mid-summer.

Transport: All Xining's major hotels offer one- or two-day trips to the lake. Regular buses run from Xiguan Station in Xining to the lake.

Lodging and food: The Qinghai Lake Tent Hotel has tents at 150 yuan and beds at 30 yuan per night. Local Tibetan-owned tents charge 10 yuan per bed. The Bird Island Hotel offers beds at 50 yuan. A wide selection of restaurants serve lake carp.

Summer Resorts in Qinghai



The crystal-clear Qinghai Lake surrounded by blooming rape flowers in July (by Baoxiu)

Virgin forests near Mengda Heavenly Lake (by Hua Ming)

HOLIDAYS IN THE BEIJING SUBURBS

In the northern suburbs of Beijing there are many summer resorts built either in the mountains, or by the waters, or on the grasslands.



Beijing Green Holiday Village

On the Chaobai River in the Shunyi District in east suburban Beijing, this holiday village's idyllic scenery includes thick woods and tranquil waters.

Climate: The average summer temperature is 28 °C while the highest noon temperature is 32 °C.

Transport: It takes about an hour by bus from Dongzhimen Bus Station to Shunyi Town, where taxis can be hired to the holiday village.

Lodging and food: There are rooms at 120 yuan or beds at 15 yuan in wood cabins and tents. Food is easily available.

Services: Various ball game, picnic and barbecue facilities, and hammocks, bicycles, fishing gear and bamboo rafts for rent.

Add: Chaobai River, Lisui Town, Shunyi District, Beijing

Tel: (10) 8948 1753

Locations of the Two Holiday Resorts Outside Beijing



Beijing Shengshui Mountain International Country Club

From the foot of Shengshui Mountain, adjacent to the Simatai Great Wall and Black Dragon Pool Waterfall, the country club looks down on the expansive waters of Miyun Reservoir in Beijing's northeast suburban county, Miyun. Nearby are hills covered with orchards and vegetable fields. The country club has a golf course, bowling lanes and facilities for water, ice and mountain sports activities.

Climate: Summer temperatures here are 8 °C lower than in Beijing and particularly cool in the evenings.

Transport: Buses run from Dongzhimen to Miyun, from where minibuses go to the club.

Lodging: Standard rooms begin at 380 yuan, family suites at 580 yuan, and a penthouse, 880 yuan. Villas for 10 or more people begin at 6,500 yuan.

Tel: (10) 6903 3388; Fax: (10) 6903 3288



A night at Shengshui Mountain International Country Club (by Shan Xiaogang)



There are other choices for enjoying the wilderness in Guangdong. These include the mountains of Luofu, Danxia, Dinghu and Shikongkeng.

WILDERNESS IN GUANGDONG

Wanlü Lake

Six kilometres northwest of Heyuan, the Xinfeng River Reservoir, also known as Wanlü Lake, is one of the country's five largest reservoirs. Over 360 islands of varying sizes and heights dot the lake, all being densely wooded and green all year round. One of them, Strange Pine Island, is a holiday village. The air is refreshing and the very clear water meets state standards for first-class drinking water.

Climate: Summer daytime temperature is about 28 °C with cooler evenings.

Transport: The Shenzhen-Beijing and Shenzhen-Nanchang trains stop at Heyuan. Coaches run from Luohu Commercial Centre in Shenzhen directly to Heyuan.

Lodging and food: The Heyuan Hotel rooms begin at 120 yuan; on Strange Pine Island, wood cabins start with 150 yuan. The island's restaurant serves mountain delicacies, including game, fish from the lake and vegetable dishes.

Admission: 76 yuan **Tel:** (762) 331 1668



Wanlü Lake is dotted with many tranquil islands. (by Jingwen)

Liuxi River Forest Park

This forest park is north of Conghua City, 93 kilometres from Guangzhou. With a lake dotted with 22 green islands, the park offers natural scenery that combines waters and hills. Six mountain peaks rise over 1,000 metres high, with Jizhen (Chicken Pillow) Mountain being the highest at 1,150 metres.

Climate: The summer weather is cool, particularly up on the mountains. Temperatures are around 23-27 °C.

Transport: Buses run from Guangzhou and Hong Kong to Conghua, from where special buses head for the park.

Lodging and food: Cuilou Hotel is the best choice with rates from 200 yuan up; its Songtao Restaurant offers wild game and local delicacies.

Admission: 22 yuan **Tel:** (20) 8186 5032



Liuxi River Forest Park is dominated by many tall peaks. (by Jingwen)

TRADITIONAL SUMMER RESORTS

The more famous summer resorts complete with convenient transport and accommodation facilities are more suitable for senior citizens.

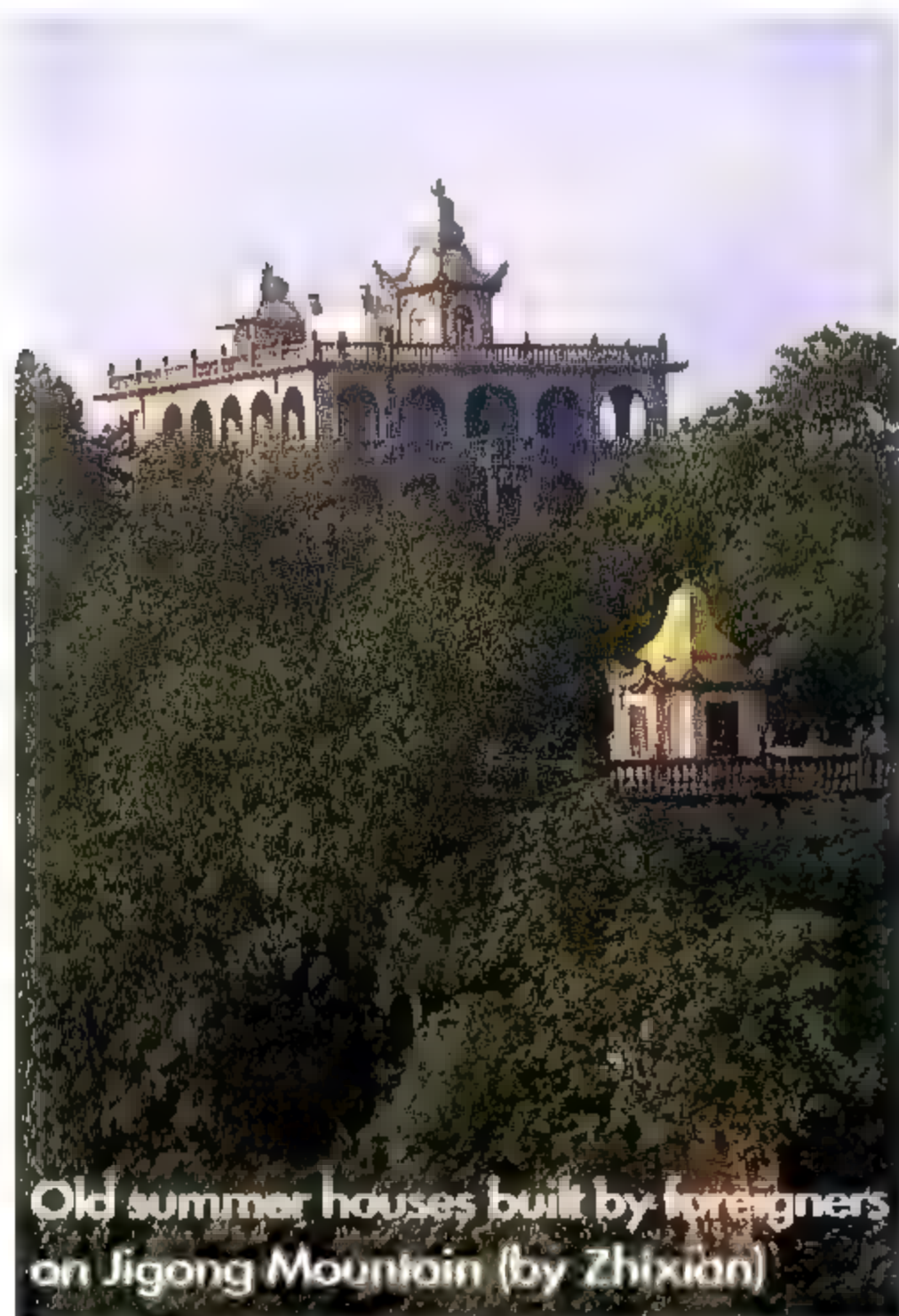


We are not introducing Mount Lushan here because, as one of the most famous summer resorts, it was reported at length in Issue No. 186.

Jigong Mountain

Although its history as a summer resort is equal to that of Mount Lushan in Jiangxi Province, Mount Jigong (Rooster) in Hubei is less famous. Over 100 years ago, foreign merchants and missionaries in Wuhan gladly found this place to escape the city's "furnace-heat" and built many stone summer houses there. Though not large, the mountain's attraction lies in its tranquillity and its oddly-shaped rocks and peaks. The main peak resembles a rooster holding its head high, thus the name. Fog and mist are frequent sights in summer.

Transport: Take a train on the Beijing-Guangzhou Railway and alight at Xinyang Station, from where minibuses go up the mountain. The many hotels, villas and sanatoriums provide rooms of different rates. There is also a food street on the mountain.



Old summer houses built by foreigners on Jigong Mountain (by Zhixian)



Mount Lushan is often shrouded in summer mist. (by Jingwen)

Qingdao, Dalian and Beidaihe

These three well-known seaside resorts in northern China offer, besides swimming, great seafood, sightseeing and recreational activities. All three are easily accessible by land, water and air, and have completely modern facilities. July and August are the busiest times of the year.

The Mountain Summer Resort and Weichang

Both places in Hebei Province have a long history as summer resorts for the imperial family. The Mountain Summer Resort in Chengde was built in the palace style and Weichang (the Hunting Ground) was a wooded mountain formerly used as the Qing-dynasty imperial hunting ground. It is quite cool in both places in summer. Chengde can be reached from Beijing by train or bus, and Weichang, lying about 100 kilometres further north, is convenient for travelling by rented cars. Hotels and restaurants are easily found.

Mogan Mountain

About 60 kilometres from Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, Mogan Mountain also has a history of about 100 years as a summer resort. The mountain is pleasingly covered with green bamboo and has a refreshingly cool climate in summer.

Transport and lodging: Many shuttle buses run between Hangzhou and Mogan Mountain. Holiday villas built by former foreign diplomatic missions up the mountain offer visitors a special experience. There is also a food street on the mountain.



Mogan Mountain features graceful peaks and sturdy bamboo. (by Song Xuejing)



These places provide attractions of greater wilderness, but it requires better physical conditions to enjoy a holiday there

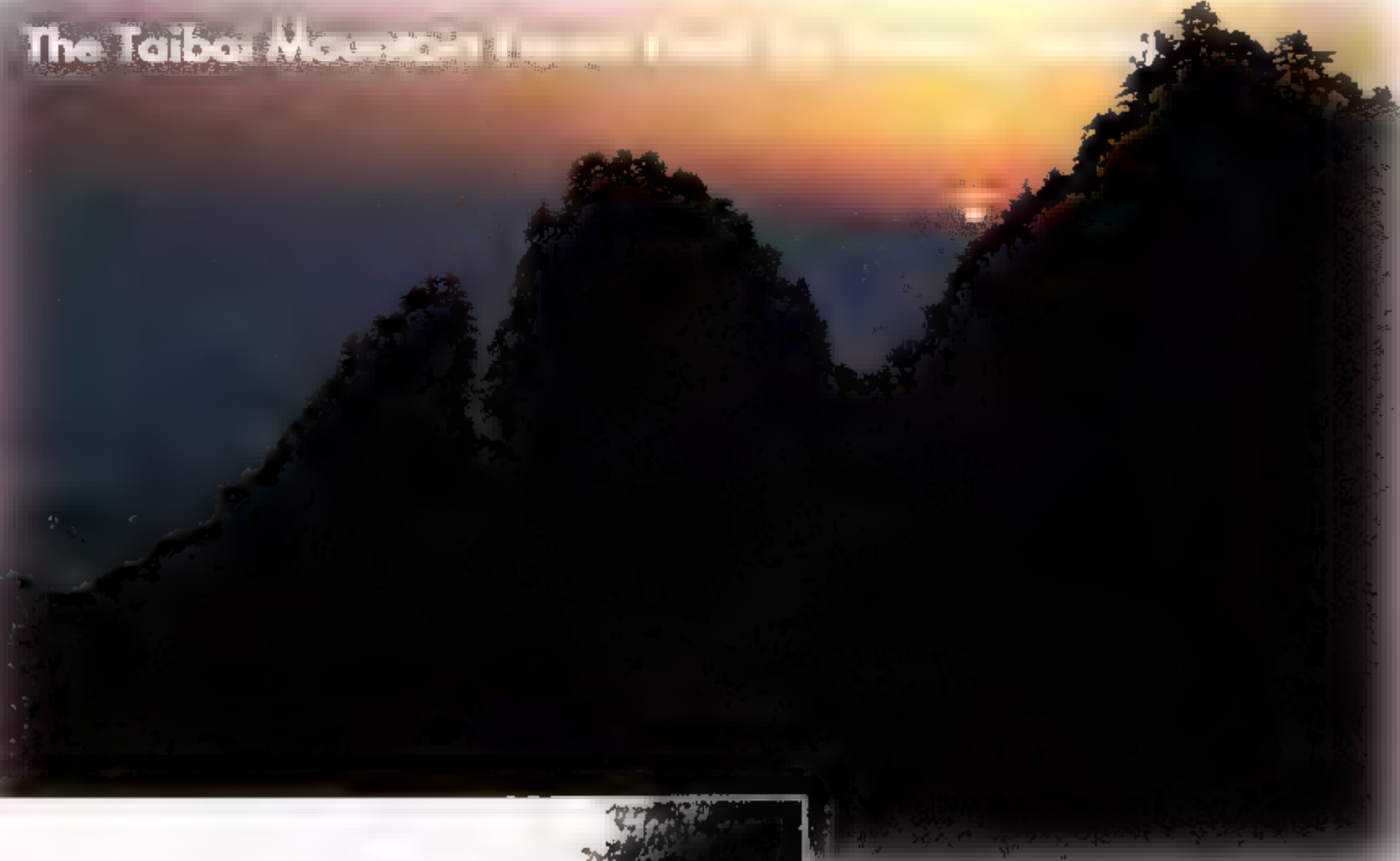
NEWLY OPENED MOUNTAIN SUMMER RESORTS

Jinggang Mountain

Lying in the south of Jiangxi Province, Jinggang Mountain is known for its towering peaks, thick forests, numerous mountain creeks and waterfalls. This uniquely charming natural environment has been opened as a tourist site for only a decade, but has complete facilities. The Shenzhen-Beijing train No. 106 stops at the Jinggangshan Station, from where buses run directly up the mountain. Lodging and food are easily attainable.

Taibai Mountain Forest Park

About 100 kilometres from the ancient city of Xi'an, this park is located in the Qinling Mountains of Shaanxi Province. In one day, visitors can experience the interesting changes of vegetation and climate between the 200-metre and 3,000-metre levels. Woollen sweaters are necessary up the mountain. Buses run from Xi'an to Tangyu, where special buses go up the mountain. You can then walk to the summit at 3,700 metres. At the mountain's foot, there are hot spring bath facilities. Accommodation and food are easily available.



The Taibai Mountain Forest Park in Shaanxi



Jinggang Mountain is known for its numerous waterfalls. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Liupan Mountain Nature Reserve

The nature reserve in the south of Ningxia borders Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. Amongst tall mountains and thick vegetation are numerous streams and deep valleys full of blooming wild lilies, providing beautiful landscapes similar to that of the famous Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan. There are also Yuan-dynasty ruins of soldiers' summer barracks.

Climate: Average July temperature is 20 °C and daytime high may reach 28 °C. In summer, showers occur often and the air is generally damp.

Transport: The reserve is about 400 kilometres from each of the three major neighbouring cities: Lanzhou, Yinchuan and Xi'an. The No. 397 train passing through Xi'an and Yinchuan goes to Guyuan, where minibuses run to the scenic area.

Lodging and food: There are many holiday villas, wooden cabins, Mongolian yurts and traditional Yugu-style tents here. Food is easily available.



The Tianshan Tent Village in Xinjiang (by Liu Hui)

Suyukou Forest Park on Helan Mountains

The forest park, in the middle section of Helan Mountains in Ningxia, about 50 kilometres from Yinchuan, consists of three major scenic zones: Suyukou, Baisikou and Helankou. Suyukou is just 35 kilometres from the Mausoleums of the Western Xia, 70 kilometres from Shahu Lake and 12 kilometres from the Huaxia Film & TV Set.

The terrain at Suyukou is noted for its dangerous and sheer cliffs and rocks. Shawozhou, the highest peak, rises up 3,500 metres above sea level, 2,400 metres higher than the surrounding Yinchuan Plain. In summer, amidst thick and sturdy vegetation, its slopes are covered with colourful blooming wild plants.

Climate: The summer daytime high temperature is 25 °C, and low is 10 °C.

Transport: A taxi from Yinchuan to the park costs about 50 yuan. Through a travel agency it costs 40 yuan per person for the bus and admission ticket.

Lodging and food: Songtao Villa in the park has standard rooms at 100 yuan up per person. The hotel operates its own restaurant.

Other sites include Wutai, Jiuhua, Huangshan, Sanqing, Yandang and Taishan mountains. The list also includes Songhua and Jingbo lakes and Changbai Mountain in the northeast, Tianshan and Altay mountains in Xinjiang, the Hulun Buir Grassland in Inner Mongolia, and others in Yunnan and Sichuan. Together with southern Gansu (introduced in the feature story in this issue) they provide choices for your ideal summer holiday sites.



Translated by F. Huang



Sanqing Mountain in Jiangxi Province is another world of cool summer (by Shan Xiaogang)

Go Sand Sliding

Photos by Yao Gang, Dong Feng
Article by Zhang Yingjuan

at Booming Sand Bay



Xianghekou (Booming Sand Bay) is the edge of the Haba Desert in Inner Mongolia's Ebinur Plateau, about 50 kilometers from the city of Badain. The dunes of the sand dunes there make it an ideal place for sand sliding fun on sand. The sand dunes, about 20 meters long and 10-15 meters wide, have a gradient of about 45 degrees. In such a dry climate, the sliding also creates a sound like drums beating, hence the name of the place. Together with the Ningxia's Humming Sand Bay in Dunhuang, Gansu, and the Shaomai (Sand Bay) in Inner Mongolia's Zhongwei, it is one of the three famous "lands of sound" in China.



When we arrived at the Booming Sand Bay, a fine drizzle fell around us. We were suddenly struck by the mysterious change in the desert. A gust of wind suddenly changed the wind, whistling and riding like a wild horse and a wild horse, a wild horse and a wild horse. When the wind and rain stopped, from the dunes we saw several birds flying in the distance. The Booming Sand Bay is not as big as the Humming Sand Bay, but it is more fun and elegant. The sound of the wind in the blue sky produces a very intense in the blue sky and the yellow sand in a beautiful and relaxing way.

Visitors can walk to the sand dunes and slide to the beach to enjoy the beautiful scenery. But most people are attracted by the fun



of sand sliding. When properly seated on a sled, a gentle push from the staff sends you down with increasing speed and a continuous booming sound all the way to the bottom.

As dusk through a thin mist, we could see the distant lights mingling with the dusky sky and sand dunes dotted the sky and desert. At this night, I was reminded of the scene from the Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei: "Straight is the valley, wide is the desert. The road is the yellow, and the sky is long and thin." Although he described a different desert, the scenery here was indeed a very similar feeling.

Upon returning to the campsite, we sat down and enjoyed a bowl of sweet milk tea and had a supper of special banquet that included cheese, mutton, butter and tender roast mutton leg. The scenery and the food left us unwilling to leave.

1. Churning up sand waves (by Yao Gang)
2. Sliding down in whatever position you like (by Yao Gang)
3. Have a camel ride in the desert (by Yao Gang)
4. Ascending the sand hill is more difficult than going down (by Yao Gang)
5. Sand sliding is getting more popular today (by Wang Feng)

Tips for the Traveller

They are sand dunes from travel site to Hualong capital of the town. Mangshi Autonomous Region, from which both buses and trains go to Baima, about 200 kilometers away. There are also some short flights to Baima. The famous Sand Bay is about 50 kilometers from Baima. The Mangshi Autonomous Region, located at the northern edge of the Hualong Desert, is a good place for sand sliding and other activities at the Baima Sand Bay. Tel: 0117, 0117 100.





Strolling Through Ancient Mountain Villages *in Wuyuan*

Wuyuan in the northeast of Jiangxi Province is the hometown of the Song-dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi. It has been known since ancient times as "the town of learning". Nestled in the picturesque landscapes are many ancient villages built during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Their beautiful dwelling houses, serene surrounding and the profound cultural background were far beyond what I had expected to see.

In a spring drizzle at dusk, I arrived at Hongguan Village and stayed for the night in a wooden house. The sound of the light rain outside the window lulled me into a comfortable sleep.

Photos and article
by Yao Gang



The most popular village-house style is the “enclosed house” with a central “sky well”. The “sky well” offers a sky view and collects rain water to large vats for fire-fighting. The villagers believe that this design implies that outstanding persons will come forth from the family and wealth pour into the house.



Hongguan Village: Birthplace of the Tallest Man in the World

The next morning, a gentle spring breeze greeted me as I strolled along a slate-paved path with mottled walls on both sides. At the village entrance was an ancient camphor tree, said to be 1,000 years old, with a mass of branches and leaves covering about 200 square metres. Hugging close to the village was a clear stream; on its banks village women were washing their clothes by beating them with a short wooden club. The men, in twos or threes, were going to the fields, leading their buffalo, carrying ploughs, rice seedlings and jars.

The village of Hongguan originated in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-79). Located along a strategic commercial passage to Huizhou (Anhui), it was frequented by merchants and travellers until the Republic period. It used to have streets full of shops and offer free tea under the ancient camphor tree. As their wealth accumulated, the villagers built many magnificent residences.

The village was the native birthplace of Zhan Tianyou, China's first railway engineer who designed the Beijing-Zhangjiakou Railway. But the most famous figure was a man named Zhan Shichai, the world's tallest man who lived here during the Qing Dynasty. When Lofty Zhan was a month old, he was already the size of a six-year-old child. He grew up to be three metres tall with 40-centimetre feet. He had worked at an ink shop in Shanghai before being employed by a British firm and becoming a British subject.

Likeng Village: A 'Sky Well' for Collecting Wealth and Fire-fighting

Likeng Village is not as picturesque as Hongguan Village, but it is well known as the birthplace of several Ming- and Qing-dynasty court officials. Two of them, Yu Maoxue and Yu Maoheng, served as Ministers of Defence and Internal Affairs after receiving the Advanced Scholar degree through the imperial examinations. The most popular house-style in this village is the “enclosed house” with a central “sky well”. As nine is considered a lucky number, every part of every structure is measured in multiples of the lucky number nine, even steps and words on memorial tablet inscriptions. The “sky well” offers a sky view and collects rain water to big vats for fire-fighting. The villagers believe this design implies that outstanding persons will come forth from the family and wealth pour into the house. All the important wooden and brick frames and the doors and windows are carved with delicate designs. That night I stayed in the new house of the village head and slept tranquilly in the fragrant aroma of fir wood.

The Town of Qinghua: A Rainbow-Bridge Time Tunnel

The town of Qinghua, the former seat of the Wuyuan county government, is a prosperous ancient market town located at the confluence of two rivers.

I walked through the town's narrow alleys to an ancient covered bridge built in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) on the Wushui River. In the evening sunlight, the bridge resembled a rainbow over the waters.

The bridge's huge piers are linked by wooden beams. Stepping on the fir planks, I created echoes, but the bridge was as firm as one built of stone. With grey-tile roofs, the about a dozen pavilions form into a long corridor. Looking to the end, it seemed like a time tunnel into the past.

The ancient builders had even considered people's leisurely interest. A few of the boat-shaped piers of green stone slabs have whitewashed open shrines on them, but most have wooden balustrades and benches for passers-by to rest and admire the beautiful river scenery. In the pavilions are stone tables carved with chess-boards and drum-shaped stone stools to entice people to play chess in the cool river breeze.

Yancun Village: Typical Linked Houses

After supper, I hurriedly got onto a bus going to Yancun Village and arrived at Yancun about midnight. I found Zhang's house in the pitch darkness with great difficulty.

The history of Yancun began in the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) when the Jin family moved in from Tuochuan. The village dwellings are typical "linked houses". On a rainy or snowy day, you can walk through the houses from one end of the village to the other without getting wet.

In heavy fog the next morning, Zhang's grandson, Abao, carried two bamboo cages of young chickens and ducks to the edge of the paddy fields. The fowls all rushed out to eat the broken rice grains Abao had spread, then dispersed to the fields or a nearby stream. Upon returning I saw that the villagers had already gone to work in the fields. The village houses scattered across the stream presented a beautiful, misty picture in the fog.

Qingyuan Village: Hometown of Qing-dynasty Merchants

This village deep in the mountains is home to the Zhan clan who came here from the Zheyuan area. The first settlers arrived more than



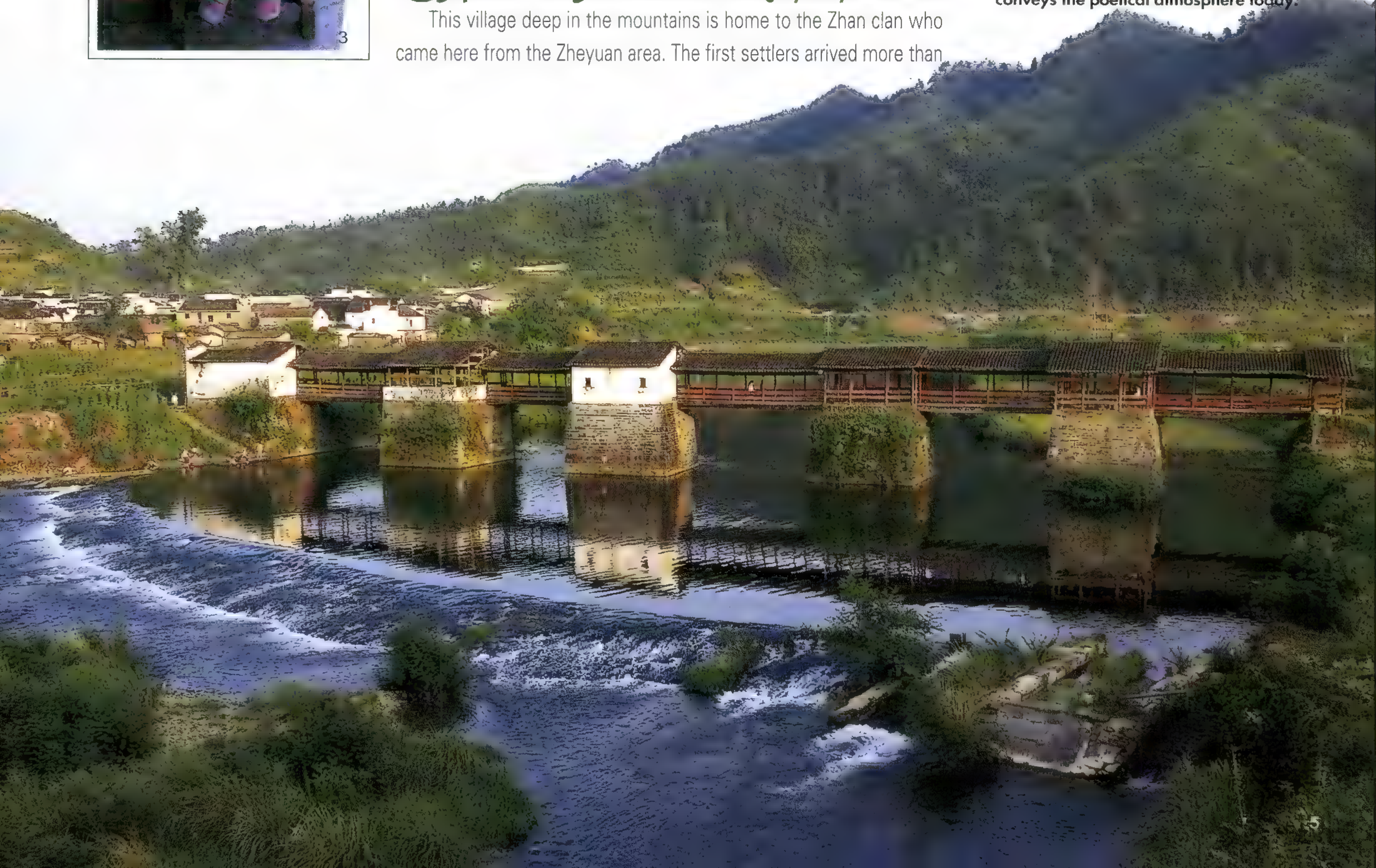
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Previous page: The beautiful 1,000-year-old Qingyuan Village

1. The "sky well" is a special feature of the Likeng dwellings.
2. The central room with two side rooms are where the family gather for meals and the place for holding ancestral memorial ceremonies.
3. Born in the ancient village of outstanding merchants, this child may also have a great future.
4. Stone steps leading to a stream in the enchanting evening light
5. The Rainbow Bridge at the town of Qinghua, built in the Song Dynasty, still conveys the poetical atmosphere today.



5



1. Qing-dynasty houses in Yancun Village
2. Elegant carvings on the ancient houses in Wangkou Village
3. Duanxin Reservoir in the evening mist
4. Likeng, encircled by streams, was originally named Liyuan, meaning "the source of the rational school of philosophy".
5. Beautifully carved beams, rafters and pillars

1,000 years ago during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), even earlier than their clan people of Hongguan Village. This well-preserved village took shape during the clan's most prosperous days in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

I followed a slate-paved path that zigzagged to cross the stream many times over bridges. Several village women carried their washing in baskets to the stream and washed the clothes on V-shaped stones there. The lovely reflection of whitewashed houses with up-turned eaves in the clear water was disturbed by a group of shelducks and white geese swimming by. At supper, I had a chance to taste the local rice wine while chatting with my host. Mr. Zhan, who had been a match factory owner, returned home in retirement. He owns several village houses and has turned the empty rooms into guestrooms.

The number of native merchants who worked elsewhere reached 400-500 during the Qing Dynasty. Quite a few became business magnates in Shanghai, Hangzhou and Guangzhou. Zhan Liwu, the famous Shanghai magnate of photographic equipment, was a native of Qingyuan Village. There used to be three arched stone bridges with shrines on them at the village entrance. One was destroyed by fire. The second, intended to celebrate the God of Literary Accomplishments, collapsed upon completion. Only the third, devoted to the God of Wealth, is still there.

Wangkou Village: A Palace of Qing-dynasty Architecture

At six o'clock in the morning, as the sun was still behind the Eastern Mountain, I was on the bus going to the county town. A turn in a valley revealed Lake Duanxin enshrouded by mists and surrounded by cloud-encircled mountain peaks. Near Xiaoqi Village, the trees and rocks, half hidden in the fog, looked like a striking woodcut work.

Down in the valley, we found Wangkou Village, which is famous for its architecture. The Yu Family's Shrine is fondly called "a palace of Qing architectural art" because its up-turned eaves, brackets, rafters and beams are all exquisitely shaped, and all the wooden parts are meticulously carved. The hundreds of beautiful complex designs and the dozens of flowers in high relief on the pillars are marvellous works of art, especially after being mellowed by 300 years of osmanthus incense smoke.





Peach Stream Village: Birthplace of Scholars and Officials

Peach Stream Village, also called Kengtou, originated from the Jin Dynasty (265-420). Legend has it that a native man, Pan Yue, resigned from his official post and returned home. He then had many peach trees planted along the stream. As the trees blossomed, girls as pretty as fairies were born. When they grew up, they attracted young men from neighbouring villages, who caused a great deal of troubles for the villagers. The furious clan chief had all the peach trees cut down and changed the village's name to Kengtou. After that, the village began to bring forth talented scholars and men of distinction.

In the last 200 years of the Ming Dynasty, over 40 scholars from the village had acquired the degree of Advanced Scholar in the Imperial Examinations. The most famous was Pan Huang, who had served as the Minister of Finance, Works, Internal Affairs and Defence. On his house door are the carved couplets, which read, "Nine Advanced Scholars from one family; four ministers of six ministries." The Pan clan's notoriety in government affairs extends to present. Some clan members are generals or scholars with Ph.D. degrees from US universities. Pan Chonggui, a famous specialist of the studies on the classic *A Dream of Red Mansions*, who has settled in Taiwan, is a direct descendant of the Pan clan in the village.

Peach Stream Village also has the largest number of ancient bridges. More than 30 small bridges are built on the stream in less than 500 metres; villagers call them "the thirty-six and a half bridges". From the Ming Dynasty on, the clan regulations permitted a member who had served as an official above the seventh rank to build a bridge in front of his house. A man in the village who had acquired the post of county magistrate through bribery was allowed to build only a half-sized bridge.

Tips for the Traveller

Transport: Trains bound for Shanghai, Huangshan and Nanchang stop at Jingdezhen. In Jingdezhen's Licun Bus Terminal, there are regular buses at close intervals going to Wuyuan. At Wuyuan's Western Station, there are regular buses going to the towns and villages in the north. As walks are frequently needed to find the villages and the people speak local dialect, a hired car with a local guide from the county seat Wuyuan is advised.

Lodging: Friendship Hotel under the county's tourist bureau has rooms for 120 yuan and up. There is no hotel in most of the villages. Visitors can stay in a local house. It is advisable to reach an agreement on the fees with the host before moving in.

Special Products: Wuyuan's green tea, Wallet Red Carp, Dragon-Tail ink stone, Wu ink stick, Cool-Water Pond fish and Jialu's paper umbrella.

Down in the valley is Wangkou, a village famous for its architecture. The Yu Family's Shrine in this ancient village is fondly called "a palace of Qing architectural art" because its up-turned eaves, brackets, rafters and beams are all exquisitely shaped, and all the wooden parts are meticulously carved.





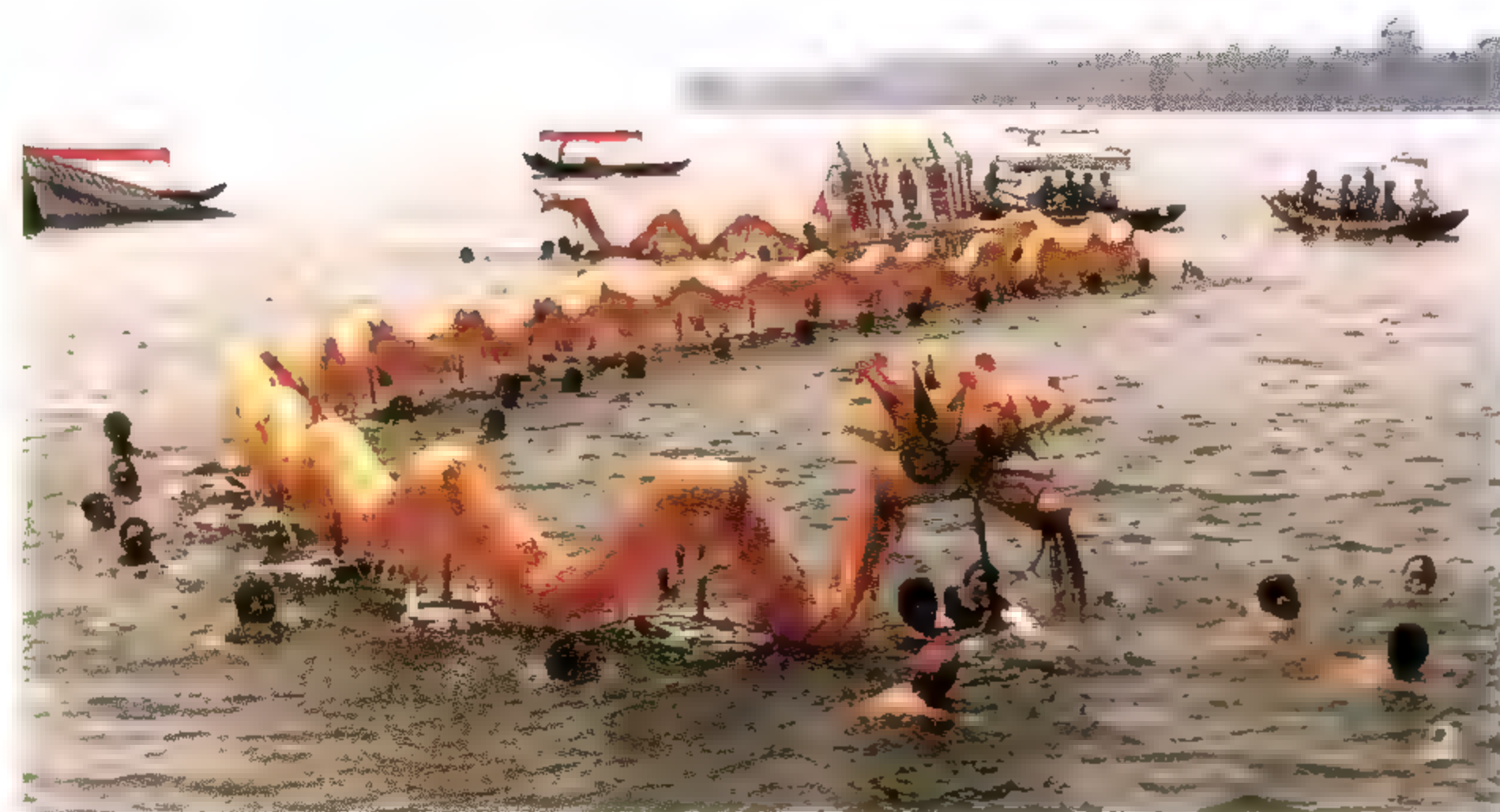
The Dragon Boat Festival: Games and Eating

Article by Jiang Hu

Over its 2,000-year history, the memorial ritual of dragon boat racing has become increasingly competitive, particularly in areas south of the Yangtse River. The Dragon Boat Festival also signals the time to eat *zongzi*, a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo or reed leaves that can be prepared in different ways.

Annually, the fifth day of the fifth lunar month is the Dragon Boat Festival. It is one of the three major folk festivals in China. The festival came into being as a memorial dedicated to Qu Yuan (340-278 B.C.), a great poet of the Warring States Period who drowned himself in a river in Hunan.

Qu Yuan was a native of the State of Chu. An honest and righteous official, he was also an outstanding poet. After he offended some corrupt officials, the poet was demoted to a countryside post in Yueyang, Hunan Province. Three years of hardships and the continuous corruption in the Chu court brought him to total despair. On the fifth day of the fifth month in 278 B.C. he drowned himself by jumping into the Miluo River. Hearing of the tragedy, the local people



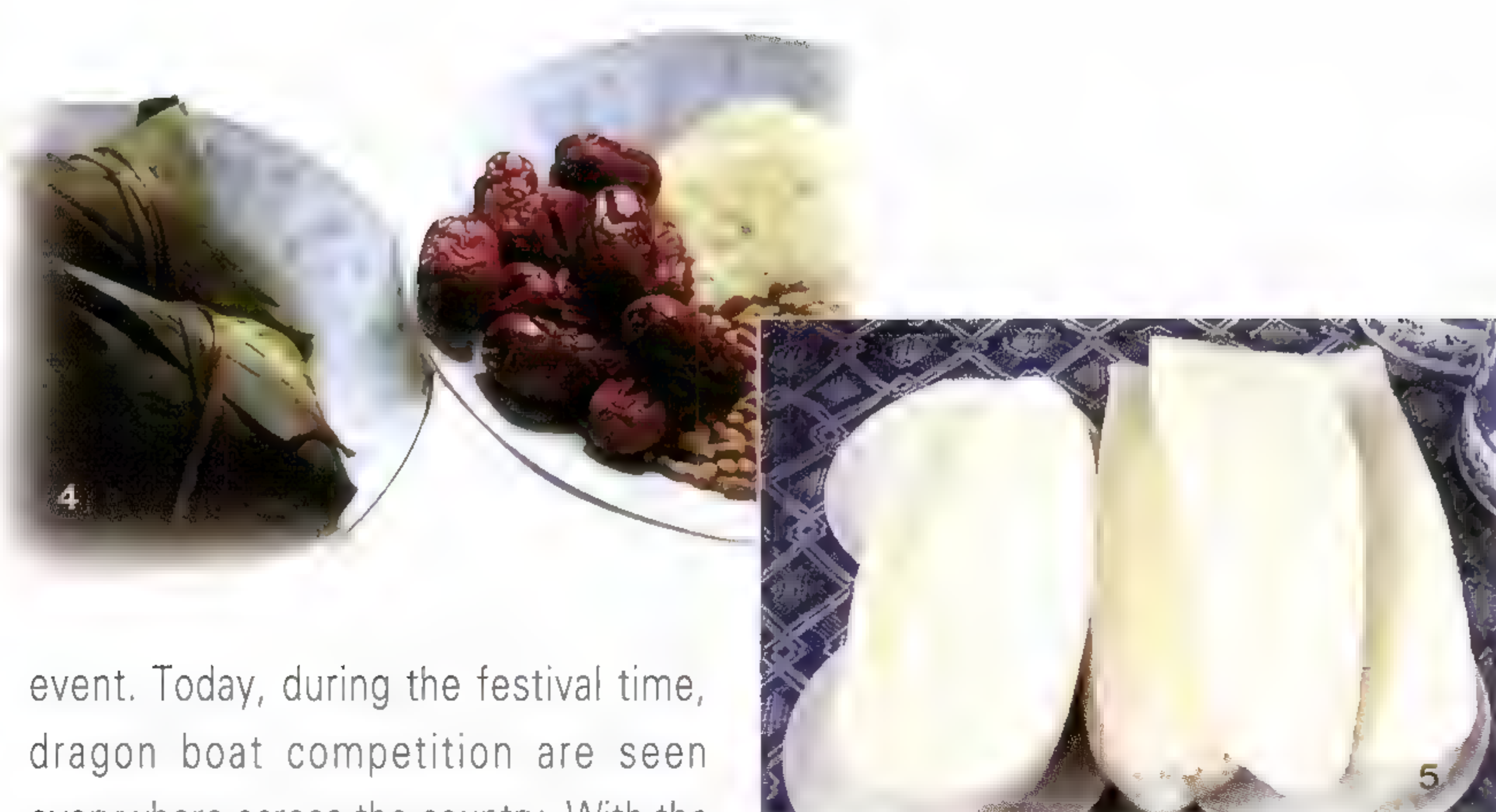
all hurriedly set off their boats and rowed all the way to Dongting Lake where the river empties, in the hope that they could find him there. This was likely the beginning of the dragon boat race.

According to another legend, after Qu Yuan's death, people threw dumplings of glutinous rice wrapped in reed leaves into the river to feed the fish so that they would not eat Qu Yuan's body. This gave rise to the tradition of making the dumplings on this day.

Dragon Boat Races Everywhere

The ceremonial activity of boat racing, dedicated to the memory of Qu Yuan, eventually became a celebrated water sports





event. Today, during the festival time, dragon boat competition are seen everywhere across the country. With the passage of time, many places have claimed themselves dragon boat hometowns, such as Shunde and Dongguan in Guangdong, Xiamen in Fujian, Zigui in Hubei and Yueyang in Hunan.

The Grand Event in Yueyang

Of all the dragon boat races, those held on the Miluo River and Dongting Lake in Yueyang, Hunan Province, are the largest in scale and the most authentic and traditional in terms of ceremony.

Very early on the festival day, almost everyone assembles by the Qu Yuan Memorial Temple built by the riverside. After offering sacrifices while carrying a model dragon head, they begin the race with a cannon shot. All the boats, in various colours, are decorated with a dragon head on their sterns. The quick movement of the oars beat up waves while the boats dash forward as if motorised. On the banks, gongs and drums are beaten, firecrackers send out deafening sounds and people cheer loudly.

Varieties of Dumplings

North or south, people eat glutinous rice dumplings wrapped in reed or bamboo leaves during the festival. On this occasion, like other festivals, it is the housewives who are most busy. Early in the fifth lunar month, northern housewives start buying reed leaves, glutinous rice, red dates and red beans, while their southern counterparts have a different shopping list. Apart from glutinous rice, the other ingredients vary from region to region. The dumplings made in Jiaxing, Zhejiang, for example, have Jinhua ham as the filling.

Ningbo dumplings combine both northern and southern techniques. In Guangdong, the more varied fillings include salted meat, salted duck yolk, diced grilled pork, chicken and red or mung beans. Dumplings with this kind of "assorted filling" are very big, weighing half a kilogram each. Broad lotus leaves must be used instead of thin bamboo leaves to wrap them.

Meatless Dumplings

A typical northern style of reed-leaf dumplings is made with pure white glutinous rice. After cooling off, they are unwrapped to reveal white pyramids. Thread is used to slice them, then honey is

sprinkled on before being served.

Southerners also make a kind of dumpling with nothing but glutinous rice. These turn out golden yellow because baking soda is mixed with the rice. Honey or sugar is also added before serving.

The dumplings come in all shapes including triangles, squares, long and pillow-like, and pagodas, which can be a foot tall. Some large ones weigh half a kilogram while for the small ones, half a kilogram gets you as many as 40 dumplings.

Chinese Mugwort Chases Away Evil

Across the country, the custom of placing of a bundle of Chinese mugwort on the door lintel has been carried out. This is supposed to chase away evil spirits. In fact, Chinese mugwort has a unique smell that strongly repels insects such as mosquitoes and flies. The Dragon Boat Festival in early fifth lunar month marks the arrival of warm weather. As insects become active it is reasonable to use mugwort to repel them.



Translated by F. Huang

1. Guangdong dumplings, soaked with soda, have a golden colour. (by Shi Jun)
2. Before the dragon boat race begins on the East Lake in Wuhan, a dragon dance on the water is performed. (by Tong Hanfang)
3. A scene of the 1998 Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Race (by Huang Yanhong)
4. The sweet and delicious dumplings of northern China often have red beans and dates as the filling. (by Shi Jun)
5. Plain glutinous rice dumplings served in slices with honey (by Shi Jun)
6. Foreign participants at the yearly Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Race (by Chan Yat Nin)

'99 China Sanshui Jianlibao Cup International Dragon Boat Championship

Time: 9:30-15:30 October 9, 1999

Venue: Beijiang River, Sanshui, Guangdong

Tel: (757) 770 4026 Fax: (757) 770 7062

Around the Dragon Boat Festival, which usually fall in early or middle June, boat races are held on the Zhujiang River in both Guangzhou and Nanhai. People who are interested can contact organisers of both venues.

Guangzhou:

Tel: (20) 831 23363 Fax: (20) 833 40347

Nanhai:

Tel: (757) 622 2401 Fax: (757) 622 2401



A Family Nadam

Photos & article by Liu Shali



Early August is the best time of the year on the vast grassland in Xilin Gol League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. At this time of the year, the sky is brightly blue, and the endless green grassland is dotted with fresh flowers everywhere.

We started our trip one day from Hohhot, capital of the autonomous region. When our coach passed the sacred mountain Bogdu Ulnei Sumu of the Abag Banner, we saw that many people and motor vehicles had formed a ring roughly the size of a football ground

not far from the highway. Over the vehicles colourful banners were fluttering in the wind and all the herder families present were in festival attire. From the loudspeakers came lively Mongolian music, another suggestion of a festival atmosphere. On inquiry, we found out that it was a family-sponsored Nadam (the Mongolian word for merriment) by a local herdsman call Ba Yilata to mark his young son's "shaving ritual", a ceremony to which he had invited all his fellow herdsman and relatives. A traditional event, the local

Mongolians consider the "shaving ritual" very important in young people's development and every young boy must undergo it. In addition, the Mongolians believe that the ceremony can bring good luck and happiness for the young ones throughout their lives. It is a pity that we got there late and missed the ceremony.

With a smile, Ba Yilata told us that the local herder families only make pilgrimage trips to the sacred mountain in the most beautiful season of the grassland. He also said that his animals produced more young ones this spring and all of them grew very fat and strong as abundant rainfall in the summer had resulted in better pasturage.

The yurts were fully packed with people. After drinking three rounds, all the guests enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content eating lamb using their traditional Mongolian knives. Now and then, merry toasting songs were heard. The Mongolian herders are extremely hospitable. Their toasting rituals are both lively and solemn, making it very difficult for anyone to decline. There are certain steps in a toast. First, the host pours the liquor into a silver bowl and put the bowl on a *hata* (a white silk scarf). Second, he raises both the liquor and *hata* to the guest while singing a Mongolian toasting song. For each guest, three bowls are presented: The first bowl is to express his appreciation of the good luck brought to him by deities; the second means to



thank the land that brings him a happy life; and the third is to show his wish for peace and harmony in the human world.

After the feast, the wrestling competition began. All the participants wore traditional Mongolian wrestling costumes — big and loose white trousers, which were covered by outer trousers embroidered with many animal and flower patterns, and ox-hide jackets covered with shining silver or bronze nails. Around each man's waist was a belt, in the centre of which was a round pattern made containing the two characters "ji xiang" meaning happiness and good

luck. The shirts were made of bright blue and yellow silk. On their feet, they wore typical Mongolian boots. The competition was quite fierce and it went through many

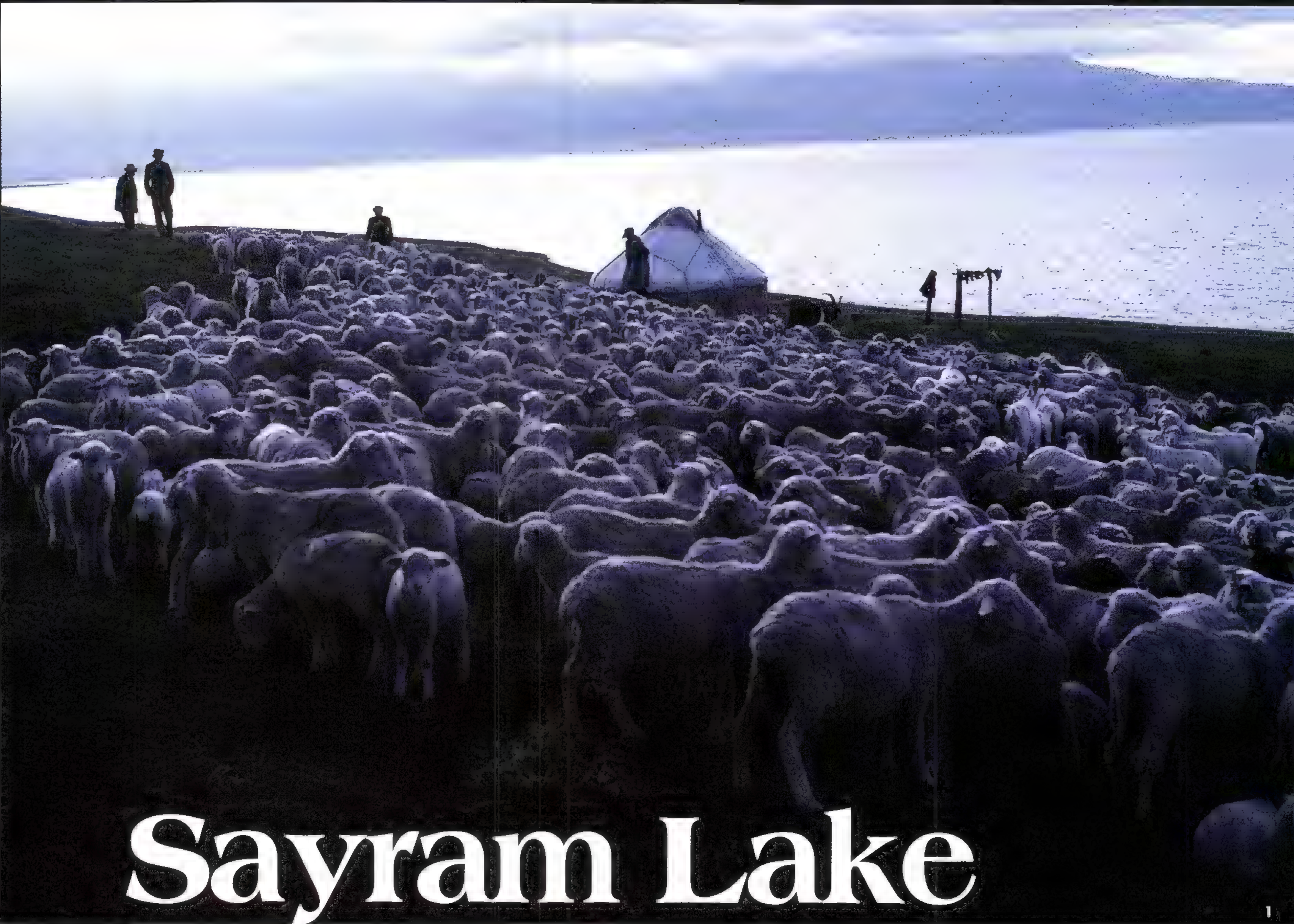


rounds. Beside the wrestling ground was a little boy of four or five whose parents were helping him put on a wrestling suit. Apparently he wanted to become a wrestler too.

After the wrestling competition were horse races, and archery and chess competitions. When night came, everyone gathered around campfires to sing and dance, enjoying themselves until completely exhausted.

1. Starting in early childhood, kids on the grassland learn riding and wrestling.
2. Getting ready for a wrestling game
3. Mutton, strong liquor and loud toasting songs — guests would not leave the yurt until they have fully enjoyed the feast.
4. July and August are the most beautiful months on the Xilin Gol grassland.





Sayram Lake

— Sun, Swimming, Snacks and Sheep

Photos & article by Midge Conner

By the time our van had barely rolled to a halt on the grasslands carpet alongside the lake, the kids had already spilled out and were hurrying to get out of their clothes and into the water. Cold, definitely. Refreshing, absolutely, because the summer sun was at high noon, baking pale bodies into shades of pink, and the only shelter from the sun's rays was to splash in the water.

We were a group of around 25, mostly white Caucasians and the majority belonging to one of China's minorities — the Russians. The ones in our group are from Yining, a city in the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture. Yining (also known as Ili and Gulja) is a few hours' drive south of Sayram Lake. Both are near the border between Kazakhstan and China's Xinjiang.

I was traveling with two other foreigners and we decided to hire a van and round up our local friends for a party at the serene Sayram Lake. It was a perfect day for an outing — hot with a clear blue sky! It

was necessary with such a large group to make sure that enough bottles of water had been purchased as well as snacks. So by the time we finally got on the road it was late morning. Our driver of the Xibo ethnic group living near Yining poked his way up the mountain pass, enjoying the journey as much as the destination. Sasha, who owns an accordion shop in Yining, took along his accordion and some of us kicked up our heels for a jolly moment, while others occasionally sang along in Russian. The emphasis, though, was on snacks and swimming.

My thoughts were not on snacking and swimming, but rather on my first visit to Sayram. I looked around and was filled with pleasant memories of my visit to Ali Akhbar's home. Was he there now? How many sheep did he have? I put on my boots and decided to pay a visit to the yurt just up the lake from us to find out.

A Kazak family from Bortala (Bole) were sitting around outside their



yurt and paid little attention as we wandered into their settlement. They had probably seen plenty of visitors as the settlement next to theirs was a tourist camp. I looked from face to face but none was familiar. Ali Akhbar had moved

his camp somewhere else. We entered the yurt and met the new people. When I sat down on the mat and looked at the scene outside the door my mind wandered back to my first visit to the lake and the day I spent with a Kazak herdsman's family.

My First Trip to Sayram Lake

On July 13 we got to the Yining Bus Station by 8:30 a.m. but it took awhile for the station mistress to get us the seats she had promised us the day before. Eventually the bus started climbing. As much of the road was damaged by the flood about two weeks before, and there was only one-way traffic in places, we had to stop three times plus once for a meal and cantaloupe. The Uygurs enjoyed staring at us while we waited.

We arrived at the lake around 2:30 p.m. And what a lake! It is huge, in ocean colours with shades of blues and purples. A few yurts could be seen up the mountain, which was covered with spruce trees. The bus driver let us off at the first inn and we had great noodles at a local cafe.

There was a dirt road meandering past the "hotel" near the lake, so we walked it awhile, filling our time taking photos.

Yurts were scattered all along the way. A van of Americans passed us and I found out that there was a small trade fair at the end of the road. They said it was a

two-hour drive and maybe 500 people were there. We tried to hitch-hike, but all afternoon we saw only big bus loads of Chinese tourists leaving the area.

We sat by the lake, napped, read and wrote. Suddenly we heard thunder and the rain clouds rapidly closed in on us. At about 6 p.m. we decided to find lodging as it was now too late to return to Yining. The first yurt we stopped at had too many people.

We were welcomed in at the next settlement of two yurts and a tent. Mama, 55 years old, has seven kids, two of whom have their own yurt or tent next to Papa, Ali Akhbar. They are from Bortala.

Staying in a Yurt for the Night

Inside the yurt, to the left were the horse apparatus and shoes; the middle back wall had the trunks and bedding, and to the right the cooking needs with a decoratively painted wooden cabinet containing a few dishes. There was no raised platform; all mats were directly placed on the dirt floor. A pot-bellied stove was the source of heat and means of cooking.

Only the oldest single daughter was in the yurt. She was busy making noodles. Papa came back in the late afternoon with all his sheep and goats. How grand to see all the sheep filling up the land! Mama and Papa made a passageway that the sheep ran through and

1. The herd coming home
2. Kazak mother and child
3. A Kazak settlement





they counted each of them — more than 300 — with an occasional goat. There was a baby goat which was so weak that it had to be taken out, and it spent a lot of time walking around crying out for its mother.

The two youngest boys rode home on their small donkeys. They loaded up the water cans and went straightaway off to the lake for water. One of the

daughters-in-law did the evening milking of the three cows. There were perhaps three horses and two dogs as well.

Mama motioned for us to sit down in the yurt. An embroidered bed pad with superb embroidery work was brought down from the stack of bedding against the back wall for us to sit on. Seating order in a Kazak yurt is important. We sat in the middle, facing the door, and Mama sat on the left. The door faced the lake. Papa came in, wearing his Kazak hat. He was feeling playful as he went up to Mama and put his hands over her eyes.

We were promptly served *nang* which were kept in a sheet that is rolled out onto the floor, and Kazak tea. Kazaks are very hospitable people. First Mama put milk in a large rice bowl, then tea, then hot water. It tasted a bit salty. Later on we had bowls of noodles flavoured with lamb. I was given the leg to chew on — a special treat to guests!



They sang Kazak songs for me while I taped them singing. Mama also chanted the Muslim call to worship. They had a *dombra* but only one string and no one could play it anyway. There was a big cassette recorder but the batteries were nearly dead. We listened to my recording but it was really hard to hear on their machine.

Earlier on I showed Mama my Kazak bracelet and she promptly took it off and put it on herself and took hers off and put it on me. And that was that! She also ended up with my jacket that I'd bought in Dali. She wanted to try it on and well, she kept it on.

I had to make a visit to the toilet and soon discovered that the pasture is the toilet. Mama just went out on the hill facing the lake and squatted. It was getting dark and I wanted to take a walk but that was not the thing to do. It was time for bed. Herdsmen and their families go to bed when it gets dark and rise before dawn. Mats were unrolled covering half of the floor. Then down came the thick red coverlets and pillows. When I got inside the yurt, there were seven people already under the covers! Mama motioned to my spot next to one of the young boys, and my Japanese friend (male) was placed next to me by the door. The kerosene lantern was kept on very low all night.

About 6 a.m. I went out to relieve myself and the dogs went for me since I was a stranger. I let out a scream and out dashed Mama, chasing away the dogs. The sky was thick with stars — the Milky Way quite visible. It was a marvellous night sky!



It was 9 a.m. when I actually rolled out from under the covers. The air was quite chilly. What a sight greeted me! All the clouds had rolled away and all that was left was nature in its

total perfection. What an absolutely gorgeous place and there were even no mosquitoes! Flowers were in profusion. I discovered a wild pink, buttercups, lady slipper and some purple flowers I couldn't identify.

Mama called me in for breakfast, but I still had a chance to walk up a trail winding into the forest of spruce trees. Breakfast was tea and *nang*. I learned a few Kazak words during breakfast. Then, after my friend gave them a packet of cookies and a pen, we left. We had been with Ali Akhbar's family nearly one whole day.



At the End of the Road

We headed to the highway but my friend decided we should try to hitch to the end of the lake to check out the trade fair. So we sat by the road and wrote in our diaries. A truck stopped and we climbed into the back with some of the local Xinjiang people — Hui, Kazak and Uygur. The 20-kilometre road took one hour. It was a miserable trip on the rutted road. I was quite worried about my camera equipment as I had to sit on it to keep from breaking my tailbone. Finally we all stood up. Our truck passed hordes of sheep and a caravan of 10 camels by the road.

The end of the road was a big disappointment. Just a handful of people were present at the trade fair, many of them asking us to change money. Only daily life items were for sale, including poles for yurts. We ate at the Hui restaurant, the lamb had just been skinned. It was a really good lunch of noodles and lamb and tomato. Interestingly, here, the Hui



1. Kazak art includes the cabinets.
2. Ali Akhbar's settlement
3. A family moment in the yurt
4. "I want my mama!"
5. A calf finds the best spot to nap.

people had food shops, the Uygurs had fabric shops and the Kazaks came to do their shopping.

A Hui man asked if I was Chinese! Today I had been asked if I was Han, Tatar, Russian, and Kirgiz. We hitched a ride to the main road with a bus load of Sunday Chinese tourists. They parked the bus on the grasslands and left beer bottles. There was broken glass all over the grasslands. It was sad to see such a mess in such a lovely place as Sayram.

The immense site at the end of the road (and at the head of the lake) is home to Nadam Festival every year, plus the trade fair. Nadam is a Mongolian festival but the Mongolians had not come this year because the grass was too short for their herds to graze. There were not many activities around us apart from some sheep busily grazing along the shore. Occasionally a Kazak on his horse would dash by to

check up on the sheep and stare at us.

Smoke rose from yurts, camels lazed around, and hardly a ripple could be seen on the surface of what seemed to be the purest lake in China. We probably started hitch-hiking at 4:30 p.m. back to Yining and a truck immediately stopped.

Swimming in the Purest Water

A familiar Russian folk tune from Sasha's nimble fingers over the accordion keyboard brought me back from my walk down memory lane at Sayram and once again I was in the present moment. I joined the women for a wander along the shore to find a hideaway for a swim as only one person had brought a swimsuit. Splashes, laughter, and we were kids once again, playing in the still pure and unspoiled water of Sayram Lake.



Despite the relatively new tourist camp behind us and a van or two nearby, it was still amazingly quiet. Sayram hasn't been turned into a major tourist spot yet and so it remains a rare and precious gem tucked in the hills. Sadly our outing was coming to an end as it was nearing 5:30 p.m. — time to leave.

Just then a camel train sauntered down the road bearing a dismantled yurt and poles. Horses bore a mother and child, and the father. They were headed — as many were at this time of year — for other pastures. We foreigners dashed ahead of them in hopes of that prized camera-shot. Near the main road another camel train had just unloaded its gear so we were able to walk close enough to get a whiff of camel's breath.

Our van driver made his way slowly down the mountain, giving us time to holler for photo stops. A gently flowing waterfall was off to the side shortly after our first major bend in the road. It fell like a chain dangling from the top story of a building, reaching first the sixth and then bottom floor. Across the road some herdsman had decided to make camp, choosing a near-perfect bit of grassland, with a spruce forest behind, a river in front and the falls above. Nature had wrapped its lovely robe around the camp. Horses and camels peacefully rested nearby.

Truly it was hard to whisper my good-byes to this heavenly haven in western Xinjiang and return to the heat and hordes of people noisily going about their daily life.

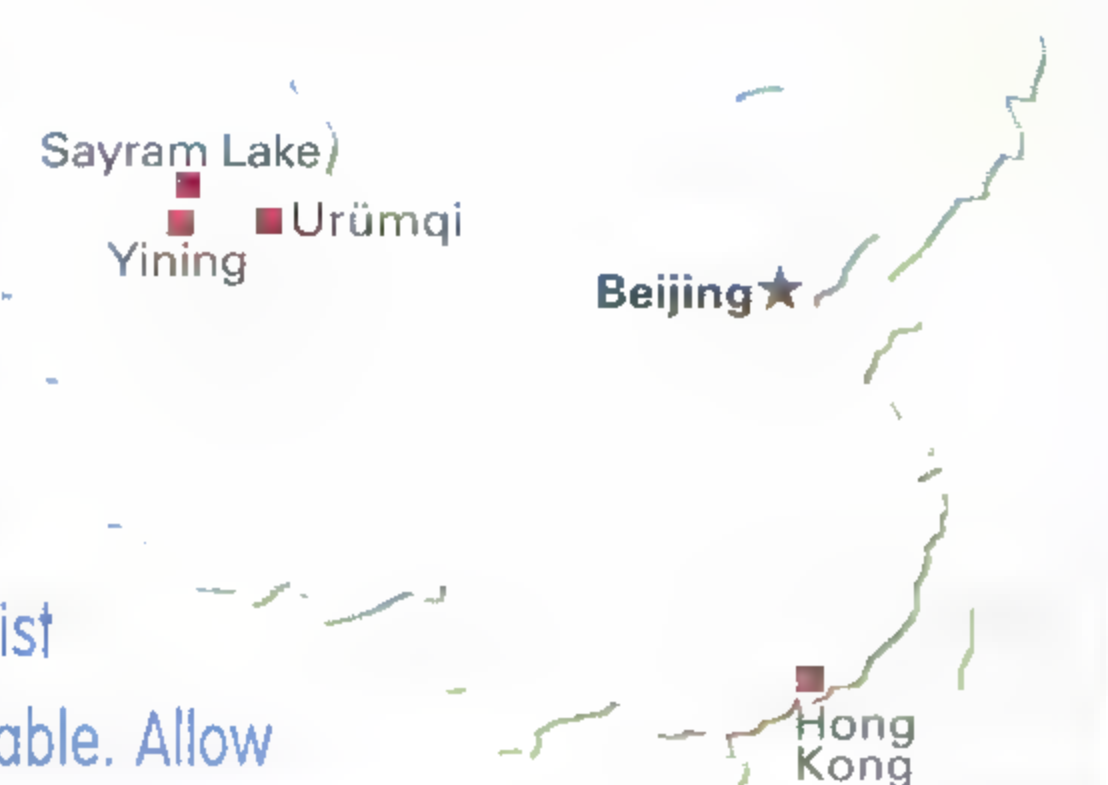
1. Moving camp by camel
2. Cooking nang bread outdoors
3. The evening milking



Tips for the Traveller

How to get to Sayram: Fly to Ürümqi, then take the daily evening flight to Yining. Sleeper buses leave for the lake from Ürümqi almost every hour. From Yining take any bus going towards Bole (Bortala) and get off at Sayram Lake. Taxis can be hired in Yining for a one-day trip to the lake, taking three hours each way.

Lodging: There are numerous hotels in both Ürümqi and Yining, catering to nearly every budget. Sayram Lake, however, has just one tourist yurt camp with meals available. Allow around one hour to walk to it from the main road. There are numerous places to pitch a tent.

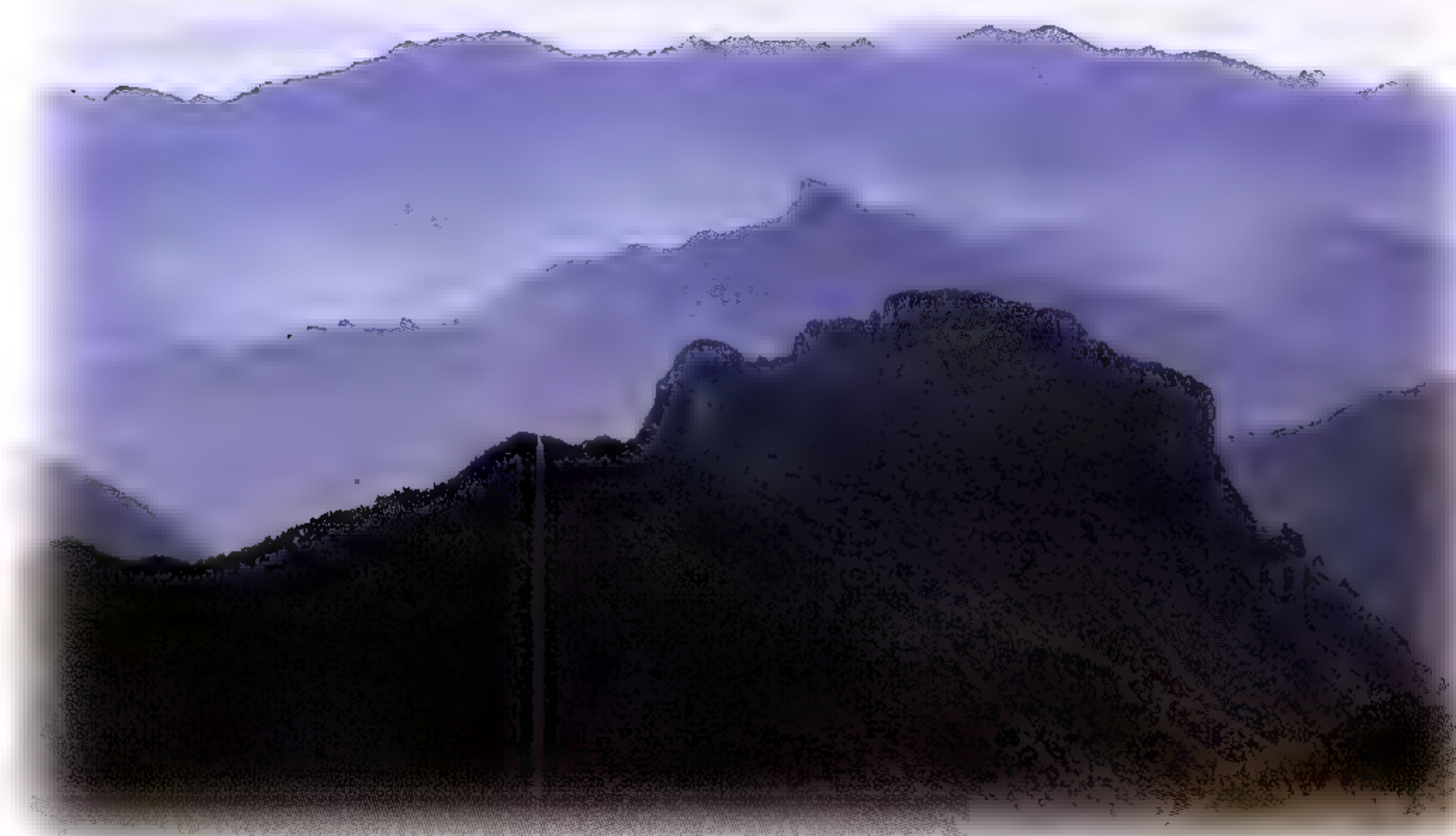


Festivals: Sayram Lake is the site of the annual Nadam Festival for the local Mongolian and Kazak herds people. It is held every July 13 along with a trade fair and lasts for one week. The biggest event is the horse race.

Weather: Late August to early September is especially comfortable as there is little rain and temperatures are moderately warm. June and July have the most rain. Herds people move to their winter homes around October and return to Sayram in June. Snow and ice on the mountain pass makes transportation difficult and dangerous in winter.

What to bring: Sturdy walking shoes or boots are advisable. Bring a rain/wind parka because the weather can quickly change. Also include water, snacks, a small flashlight, a sun hat, sunscreen, plenty of films, and a few small gifts such as postcards or candy for the children.

Shennongjia, which covers the eastern section of the Dabie Mountain in western Hubei Province, is indeed a mysteriously appealing place. This famous nature reserve, located at the meeting point of the tropic and temperate zones, features a unique climate and abundant natural and ecological resources. In its 3,250 square kilometres, there are 570 animal and bird species, and over 2,400 plant species, including 800 varieties of wild flowers. Over 60 plant species here are considered "living fossils". Among the rare animals and birds are the golden monkey, spotted leopard, white bear and white stork, all of which are considered state treasures.



The 3,250-square-kilometre Shennongjia Nature Reserve supports more than 2,400 species of plants, including some "living fossils".

Shennongjia Nature Reserve

Photos by Xu Tiezheng Article by Xie Guanghui

People even say there are "wild men" in Shennongjia.

Travel in Shennongjia usually starts at Muyuping Town. Although there are over 1,200 kilometres of highways through its forests, no scheduled bus services exist so as to protect the reserve's natural ecology. Therefore, visitors touring the reserve must rent their own automobiles.

Shennongjia is indeed worthy its name of "kingdom of flora". As our vehicle spiralled up the mountain road, we couldn't help but admire the brilliantly blooming wild flowers and rare trees. Thanks to the government's stipulation forbidding the felling of trees and picking of flowers and fruits in the reserve, all the rare flowers and plants are flourishing. On the way, we saw a great deal of flowering Chinese crab-

apples, balloon flowers and strawberries, as well as such rare flora as Japanese camellia and ginkgo now and then.

On our way up to Dongbaya (ya means mountain saddle), 3,000 metres high, we witnessed the vivid distribution of plants. Down below is a lush thick forest; in the middle is a dark green fir forest while the mountain slopes above are mostly covered by green grass, amidst which grow groves of arrow bamboo. The air is extremely fresh and the views exceptionally enchanting. I wish I could stay there forever.

According to a legend, the highest peak, Shennongding, is the place where the Holy Farmer climbed up to heaven with a ladder. There, we saw innumerable straight firs as tall as 40 metres. On the ground is a thick layer of lichen, fungi, and naturally fallen trees,



Shennongjia is covered in ice and snow during its long winter.



Hair of the "wild man" on display at Xiaolongtan (by Li Delu)

over which grow sprawling vines. Primitive and quiet, the whole place appear like a dreamland. The guide told us that this is a true primitive forest. We climbed to the top of a tall peak surrounded by white clouds. Looking around,

luxurious forests and blooming flowers. The surrounding views keep changing along with the climatic change, making it an ideal sight for tourists.

Other tourist spots include "Hongping Gallery", Jianzhuya, Yanziya and Dajiu Lake, all connected by a highway. Anyone trying to catch a view of the golden monkeys or other wild animals must bring binoculars. As for seeing the so-called "wild man", the possibility seems remote. Those who are interested can visit the reserve's display room at Xiaolongtan (Small Dragon Pool).

At Qianjiaping, which is famous for sheer peaks, we saw the famous dove tree, a gigantic *Davidia involucrata*. We also found a large number of metasequoia, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* and *Euptelea pleiospermum*, all of which are rare species with a history of 10-80 million years. Moreover, we saw over 2,000 artificially cultivated dove trees, whose leaves dancing in the wind resembled millions of white doves flying.

At the Houzi (Monkey) Rock, streams gurggle amidst



Unique "waterfall clouds" add a mysterious touch to the area. (by Huang Keqin)

Translated by Zg. Li

Transportation and Climate

Songbai Town in the eastern part of Shennongjia is the political, economic and cultural centre of the nature reserve. The town is 313 kilometres west of Xiangfan, 248 kilometres north of Yichang, 205 kilometres east of Xiangxi in the Yangtse River's Three Gorges, and 214 kilometres south of Shiyan. Buses go from all these places to Songbai daily. There are many flights into Wuhan, capital of Hubei, from where buses and trains go to Yichang. There are also direct flights from major cities to Yichang. From Yichang, there is a choice of a daily long-distance bus to

Songbai Town or a ship to Xiangxi, from where a bus drives 100 kilometres to Muyuping.

The best time for travel in Shennongjia is from June to October. With an average temperature of 20°C in summer, it is an ideal summer resort for holidays and adventures.

However, as Shennongjia is a newcomer in the tourist industry, its facilities are somewhat less developed. Therefore, the use of local travel agencies and touring in groups with local guides is recommended.

Tourist Sites in Shennongjia



Editor's note: Ms. Li, one of our readers from Hong Kong, sent in several photo albums filled with pictures of children she had taken on her travels.

Six years ago, Ms. Li went to the mainland of China for a visit and has returned every year since then. She had visited mostly the western part of the country, including Tibet, Xinjiang and Qinghai. She loves the space, tranquillity and innocence of these places away from the hustle and bustle of great metropolises. She loves the natural scenery free from the pollution of modern industry, but what she loves most are the children who are all so pure and natural. So she has recorded these charming little faces.

Capturing the Innocence of Children

Photos & article by Li Qiwei

I love travelling and when I return from my trips, I find most images on the photos I take are children. Focusing on the young and childish faces, I communicate with them sincerely and press the shutter — this has become the most pleasant activity of my trips. Perhaps this is due to the nature of a woman, or the result of my profession as a teacher.

I love children. Although they vary from region to region, country to country, each group has unique characteristics, they always have something in common — their pure innocence. Children living in remote areas of China attract me the most. Their faces red because of the highland wind and sunshine; they often break into a hearty laughter, revealing their white

teeth as if they were blossoming sunflowers. Then they suddenly change to gloomy expressions over some thing they believe is serious, or when they feel wronged; two streams of tears roll down, accompanied by running noses.

Children have rich expressions and sincere sentiments, but to catch their expressions with a camera requires great effort. There are many valuable instances that I have failed to capture with the camera and have to settle for their memories in my mind.

I will continue to travel and take photos of children. I hope every trip will bring back more innocent faces, adding youthful purity to my gradually "more experienced life".

►At Turpan, in Xinjiang, a group of charming children of the Uygur ethnic group stood around me. The youngest little fellow, chubby and bare-chest, is perhaps just two years old. When I took his photo, he could not understand and was curious about what I was doing. He touched the camera and looked right into the lens. Just at this moment, an older, bell-selling child put a string of bells on the small boy's neck. This caused the little fellow to burst into tears. He might have seen these bells usually worn on the neck of beasts of burden and felt it was an insult to him.

I hurriedly tried to calm him down and he quickly returned to smiling. When I got on the bus, he followed and wanted to go with me....



◀On the way to Lhasa from Xining, our group ran into a landslide and were delayed for more than 10 hours. When we waited on the grass, I soon became friends with a group of Tibetan children with the help of the one sentence of Tibetan I had just learned, meaning "Good luck to you !" At the beginning, they smiled at me and later they tried to communicate with the help of hand gestures. By the time we had to move on, I found it hard to say good-bye.

Never did I expect to run into them again 10 days later.

At Damxung, Tibet, I went to watch a local Tibetan opera. One kid of the group saw me. He ran away and brought back a large crowd. They recognised me.

All of us were extremely happy and we took a group photo.



►On the bus to Golmud in Qinghai, we stopped at a small town and all the passengers went off to have lunch. Several of us walked into a Muslim restaurant and while waiting to be served, we played with the restaurant owner's little girl. She patted an empty plastic bottle on our backs one by one and then ran away with a naughty giggle.

I caught up with her and offered to take her picture. She was not at all shy and posed with all kinds of naughty expressions.



◀On the way to the No. 1 Glacier in Xinjiang, we saw several children selling things by the highway. Our driver told us these kids were selling cheese and had to fulfil their quota before they could return home.

I looked around but saw no residential houses. Their homes must be far away. I asked the driver to stop and a boy ran towards me. I bought his cheese, not to eat but to enable him to go home early. Just then several other kids ran over too. Luckily my fellow travellers on the bus as well as the driver bought their cheese.

Genuine smiles crept onto their faces. The first boy to finish his day's selling job rubbed his nose as he was starting home.



►On the Tibetan highland, there are many dogs who are indispensable to the herdsman. Responsible for watching over their owners' property, these dogs are really ferocious animals. They are, however, extremely docile towards their owners.

I saw a little girl playing with her large black dog. No matter how hard she beat it, pulled it and pushed it on the ground, the animal showed no slightest bad temper. Instead it was as docile as a lamb. When I suggested I take a picture of her, her immediate reaction was to hold her beloved dog in her arms for the pose.



In My Experience

Holding Your Camera

During your travels you may not always have your tripod nor anything around to use as a substitute. To keep your camera from moving in such a situation, what you can do is to hold yourself steady by leaning against a corner or sitting down. Wrapping the camera belt around your wrist or hanging it around your neck will help you avoid out-of-focus pictures. You can also try the following methods:

1. Hold the camera tightly with both hands against your face and you can easily keep it from shaking.
2. Hold the camera vertically and use the left hand to support it. Your right hand which presses the shutter button at the upper left corner can also help stabilise the camera.
3. Put the top side of the camera down and hold it horizontally so that the back of the camera is closely pressed against your forehead for extra support.
4. Try to use as much outside support as possible, such as a tree, a building, other solid objects, or a motionless shoulder.
5. Try tilting your shoulders and leaning your back against a corner to increase steadiness.
6. Stand still and plant both feet as wide apart as your shoulders. Press your elbows against your chest or to the sides of your body.
7. When you use low speed for your shot, sit on the ground and rest your elbows on your knees. It will make it easier for you.
8. Tie a three-metre-long rope to make a loop. Spread your legs to firmly stand on the rope and keep the third point of the loop on the camera to form a triangle. When making the shot, raise the hand holding the camera slightly upward and it will increase stability.

Translated by F. Huang

Crossing the 'Ghost Gate' at Night

Photos & article by Wu Wenju



Keeping warm by burning abandoned tyres found by the roadside

When I told the audience at the meeting hosted by the Public Information Department of Ruoqiang County that on our way to Golmud in Qinghai we were going to cross the Tashida-

ban (*ban* meaning slope) on Altun Mountain, which is over 4,000 metres above sea level, I really put them in a sweat.

The sheer Altun Mountain, known as the "ghost gate", has, along with the treacherous terrain, always deterred travellers. Here lies the only section of China's national highway network that does not have regular buses and that before us no cyclist had dared to travel across either. Yet now we wanted to try this 60-kilometre stretch, not having any other choice unless we doubled back on the route we had already travelled. Besides, to leave Xinjiang, this seemed to be the quickest route — to journey to Golmud in Qinghai and then proceed across the Tanggula Mountains to Tibet. Since we had already travelled through the Taklimakan Desert, and ascended the highest border checkpoint 5,100 metres above sea level, we were confident that we could conquer the "ghost gate".

After a short rest in Milan, where we picked up a supply of two kilograms of fried dough-sticks and 20 boiled eggs, at 9 a.m. on November 23, 1998, we set out towards the Milan Bridge. The 30 kilometres of road from this point to the road maintenance station at Awuzi at the foot of the mountain was uphill and paved with sand and pebbles. We only managed to cycle for six kilometres. On the remaining 24 kilometres, the best we could do was push our bikes. I put all our luggage on the bike of my companion, Liu Yubao. At 37 he was 19 years younger than me, but the luggage plus his bike weighed more than 60 kilograms and most people would have found it unbearable to push that weight forward on such a road.

The road was almost totally deserted with vehicles rarely going by. A few passenger-carrying type 212 jeeps, travelling at irregular intervals, were the only means of transportation that plied this road. At 6 p.m., we came to the foot of the mountain. Normally, we would have stopped for the night at the road maintenance station and made the ascent the next day. But reality told us that in order to time our down-slope ride

for daytime, we must cross the mountain that night. It would be inviting death to reach the summit at night, for the conditions here were much worse than those on even the most rudimentary highway. When I recall that night's experience, I often break into a cold sweat. And a long time after the crossing, I still often wake up with nightmares.

Luckily it had not snowed till then, but on the mountain, at a height of more than 4,000 metres above sea level, the temperature still dropped to about -15 °C. After 7:30 p.m., darkness had totally shrouded the land and we found ourselves in a valley about 20 kilometres long. Liu led the way with a flashlight veiled by a piece of red cloth, for we had heard that wild beasts were afraid of red light. In the moonlight, we laboured upward step by step, pushing our bikes ahead. This road, originally built for the army, was not still officially open to traffic, because frequent landslides and devastating floods had caused many potholes and loose stones on the narrow surface, not mentioning the deep abyss by its side. The deadly stillness was almost suffocating and the occasional howling of wolves sent a chill down our spines. We pushed forward at a speed of two kilometres an hour. At 9 a.m. the next day, we finally had the summit under our feet.

Going down required a firm grip on the brakes and cycling slowly. The road downhill, flanked by sheer cliffs, was narrow, bumpy and full of twists and turns. If we had ever tried to go on during darkness, the only result would have been death. Even during the day, we had to be extra-cautious as the road had often changed course where it had been destroyed by flood. It took us six full hours to go down.

When we reached the Kuluqiukan road maintenance station at the 1,356-kilometre point, we collapsed on the ground, too tired to stand up again. Three Uyghur workers accorded us a warm reception. One of the young men held up his thumb and said in broken Chinese: "You're heroes, real heroes!"



A warm reception by Uyghur workers at the road maintenance station

Having visited the Tibet Slide Show hosted this March by Hong Kong China Tourism Press, my thoughts went back to my unforgettable travel experiences in Tibet in April last year.

We went to Lhasa on a sleeper bus from Golmud in Qinghai along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. When we bought the bus tickets, we were only asked to show our travel certificates for visiting the mainland and the traditional travel pass for Tibet was no longer a requirement. There were no checkpoints on the way neither.



On the highway to Tingri, I ran into Hong Kong visitors whom I had befriended in Lhasa a few days before.

Travelling in Tibet

Photos & article by Kang Bailing



A stand owner at Barkor Street

The Barkor Street

The Jokhang Monastery is situated on Barkor Street, the centre of Lhasa. Early every morning, Tibetan Buddhist devotees come to the open ground in front of the temple to prostrate themselves there in prayer. From there they proceed clockwise along Barkor

Street, turning prayer wheels as they walk. Barkor Street is also where many people set up their private stalls to sell things. Naturally, the place is a tourist attraction.

The lamas in the temple are generally friendly and even playful. I remember one of the lamas in charge of the reciting of Buddhist sutras made Buddha statues with roasted barley flour; he even joked about trading his religious objects for my camera.

Tashi Cafe and Sa'gya Monastery

On Barkor Street stands a restaurant called Tashi Cafe, a favourite haunt of foreigners. The restaurant is modestly furnished, but on the walls hang many oil paintings of Tibetan scenery, some with price tags on, waiting to be sold. Food at Tashi Cafe is delicious and inexpensive. A filling breakfast costs only around 10 yuan. Even to this day, the beautiful tastes of its chocolate pie and banana pancake still seem to linger in my mouth.

The Sa'gya Monastery lies west of Xigazê, the second largest city in Tibet. Whether you go from Xigazê to watch the Qomolangma Peak at Tingri or go on to Nepal from Zham, the monastery is on the way. Compared with other monasteries in

Lhasa, Sa'gya is not large in size and has nothing really special. But we did notice, however, that human skulls are displayed or painted on the frames of its doors and windows. But the skulls are not at all scary.

Be Prepared Against Mountain Sickness

Our jeep climbed from Xigazê which is 3,000 metres above sea level to Tingri at about 5,000 metres. I was afraid of suffering from mountain sickness but the urge to see Qomolangma, the highest peak on earth, overcame this fear.

Since Tibet is located on a plateau that is on average more than 4,000 metres above sea level, mountain sickness is something to beware of. Pills against the condition can be bought in Chengdu or Golmud before you make your way into Tibet. One type of tablet called "Sanpu Hongjingtian" is very effective.

Caught in the Middle of Snow

Originally we had planned to drive back to Xigazê from the border town of Zham. However, when we went through a section of road that was totally snowed over, with icicles hanging down on both sides, several trucks were stuck. Ordinarily, to go through here would take no more than three minutes, but this time we waited for half a day.

At noon, we arrived in Gyangzê. The weather was bad and the sky was rather grey. I woke up the next morning to find a white world of snow outside the window. It had snowed during the night. Going out of the hotel I came upon people, old and young, men and women, enjoying a snow fight. They were making snowballs and trying to hit each other with them.

Translated by F. Huang



Posing for a photo with a young lama

I took the whole family to spend the Spring Festival of this year in Sanya.

We checked into the Gloria Plaze Hotel which was just 50 metres away from the Yalong Bay Beach. Sandy beach and coconut groves are really wonderful sites for holiday makers. My wife and I changed into swimming suits and charged right into the green waters. My daughter and her son played on the sand with a little plastic spade.

Touring Hainan Island

Photos & article by Tuo Zi



At night, we had the New Year's Eve dinner in the hotel. I found the steamed fish both tender and tasty. The hyacinth beans cooked with garlic sauce, Hainan style, was really a unique vegetarian dish. These plus the red Great Wall wine lifted our spirits. When the melodious tune played by the musicians in the lobby reached my ear, I felt as if I were living in heaven.

A Buddhist Culture Tour

On the lunar New Year's Day, we visited the South Hill 40 kilometres west of Sanya City. After we went through the "The Only One" gate, our grandson began to run and we ran after him. Soon we found ourselves in front of the Hall of the Goddess of Mercy, where we lit up incenses and paid 20 yuan per person for the worship. When we saw the statue of the thousand-handed goddess built with 150 kilograms of gold and silver at the cost of 192 million yuan, we were simply overwhelmed and I could not help taking snap after snap with my camera.

Soon we went to the South Hill Temple at the southern tip of the park. The Buddha statue in the Grand Hall, still being built, sat there with mud all over its body. On the way back to the hotel, we got off the bus and walked into the Good Wish Park with a good luck bell of 1.8 metres in height and 800 kilograms in weight. The whole family made a donation and beat the bell three times to show our respect for the Buddha and supposedly chase away all disasters. Statues of the 18 Arhats, with their varied and vivid expressions, were arranged

in a bamboo grove. My daughter drew lots by choosing a bamboo strip in the temple and it was one of the inauspicious ones.

Attacked by Monkeys

On the second day of the New Year, we went to the Monkey Island. After about an hour's bus ride from our hotel, we changed to ship at the Xincun Harbour in Lingshui County. When we got off the ship, we rode in a mini-bus for five minutes and were then inside the Monkey Island Nature Reserve. In order to communicate with the animals, we had brought food from the hotel. Group after group of monkeys saw us and surrounded us with no hesitation. Inexperienced as she was, my wife clutched the bag of food with both arms, which only whetted the monkey's appetite. They pulled her bag, jumped onto her head, shoulders and arms. She had to rely on the assistance of the park staff to get out of the dilemma.

When we ascended the summit and looked at the South China Sea across Xincun Town, we were awarded with enchanting views. On the mountain is a temple which houses an interesting group statues of Monk Xuan Zang and his three disciples, including the Monkey King.

A Lonely Traveller

Before I knew it, my family had to return home as their holiday period was over. I went to Qionghai City by crossing the Dongshan and Baishi mountains all by myself.

From my hotel, after a five-minute ride on the electric-powered pedicab at a cost of two yuan, I arrived at the Wanquan River Scenic Area which consists of the Wanquan River wharf, Shazhou Isle, coconut groves at Wenquan Town and the Wanquan River Hotel. Here the expansive river is embellished

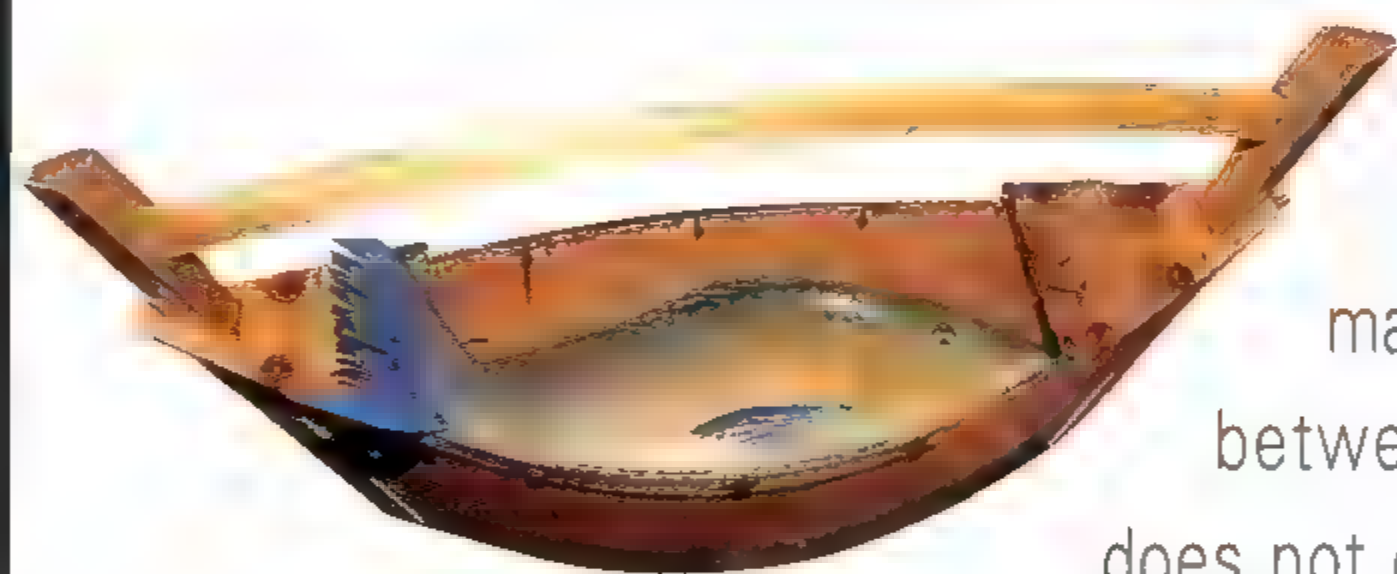


with sail boats and flanked with graceful coconut trees, presenting a mesmerising tropical scene. The cruise ship charges five yuan per person and allows the tourist a happy leisure ride on the river. A plane takes two passengers up at a time to give them a panoramic view of the scenery below.

Where the River Goes into the Sea

The second day in Qionghai, I went to visit the Bobie Seaside Tourist Area at the estuary of the Wanquan River, some 18 kilometres from Jiayi Town. This scenic zone takes in three rivers (Wanquan, Longgun and Jiuqu), three islands (Dongyu, Yuanyang and Shabo), and two harbours (Bobie and Tanmen). When the tide rises, water submerges the Shabo Island, making it an islet in the middle of the Wanquan River, but when the tide subsides, the river water retreats and makes Shabo an island in the sea. So much so, the island serves as a watershed between the green river and blue sea. An island in the Wanquan River near its estuary houses the super-luxurious Bobie Village Golf Club.

This kind of fish is a famous local delicacy.



On the following day, I visited the Guantang Hot Springs Holiday Resort. The water here, maintaining a temperature between 70 °C and 90 °C, does not emit a strong smell of sulphur as is the case in many other hot springs. The water can thus provide for the needs of sauna bathhouses.

My Experience of Being Cheated

My next stop was the Dongjiao Coconut Forest in Wenchang. As soon as I arrived at the Wenchang wharf, I was surrounded by boat owners, each trying to take me to his boat. A middle-aged ship owner walked up to me and said: "Go on my boat. I'll take 20 yuan and this is the cheapest price you can find." He looked honest and sincere. So I decided to go on his boat. Just at this moment, four more people came to join me, even though the boat owner had assured me that I would be the only passenger for the price I paid. Later, however, I noticed that the four people together paid 30 yuan, while I alone had to pay 20 yuan. When I tried to find out the truth

from the boat owner, he only kept silence and insisted I pay the money. I noticed several locals were gathering around me and beginning to show off their muscles. I knew I was no match for a group of locals and had to swallow the bitterness of being cheated. Later I found out that a ride on the large ferry boat only costs five yuan.



A boat carrying special passengers, Dongshan sheep, crossing the Wanquan River

Translated by F. Huang

Tips for the Traveller

Travel by air:

The return ticket between Hong Kong and Sanya is HK\$1,770 and that between Hong Kong and Haikou is HK\$1,840.

Hotels:

Sanya: Gloria plaza Hotel (Add: Yalong Bay, Sanya, Tel: 899-856 8855) offers a double room for HK\$700 per day. Package deals inclusive of the air ticket and hotel service for 3 nights and 4 days are HK\$2,290; and for 4 nights and 5 days, HK\$2,590. For more information, call 2516 9228 at Hong Kong China Travel Service Co. Ltd.

Qionghai: Qionghai Holiday Village (Add: Wanquan River estuary, Bobie Town, Qionghai, Tel: 898-277 7180) offers a double room at 388 yuan per day.

Fuhai Hot Springs Holiday Village (Add: Guantang Development Zone, Wenquan Town, Qionghai, Tel: 898-280 2088) charges 588 yuan for a double room.

Haikou: Haikou Hotel (Add: 4 Haifu Avenue, Haikou, Tel: 898-535 0266) charges HK\$480 for a double room.

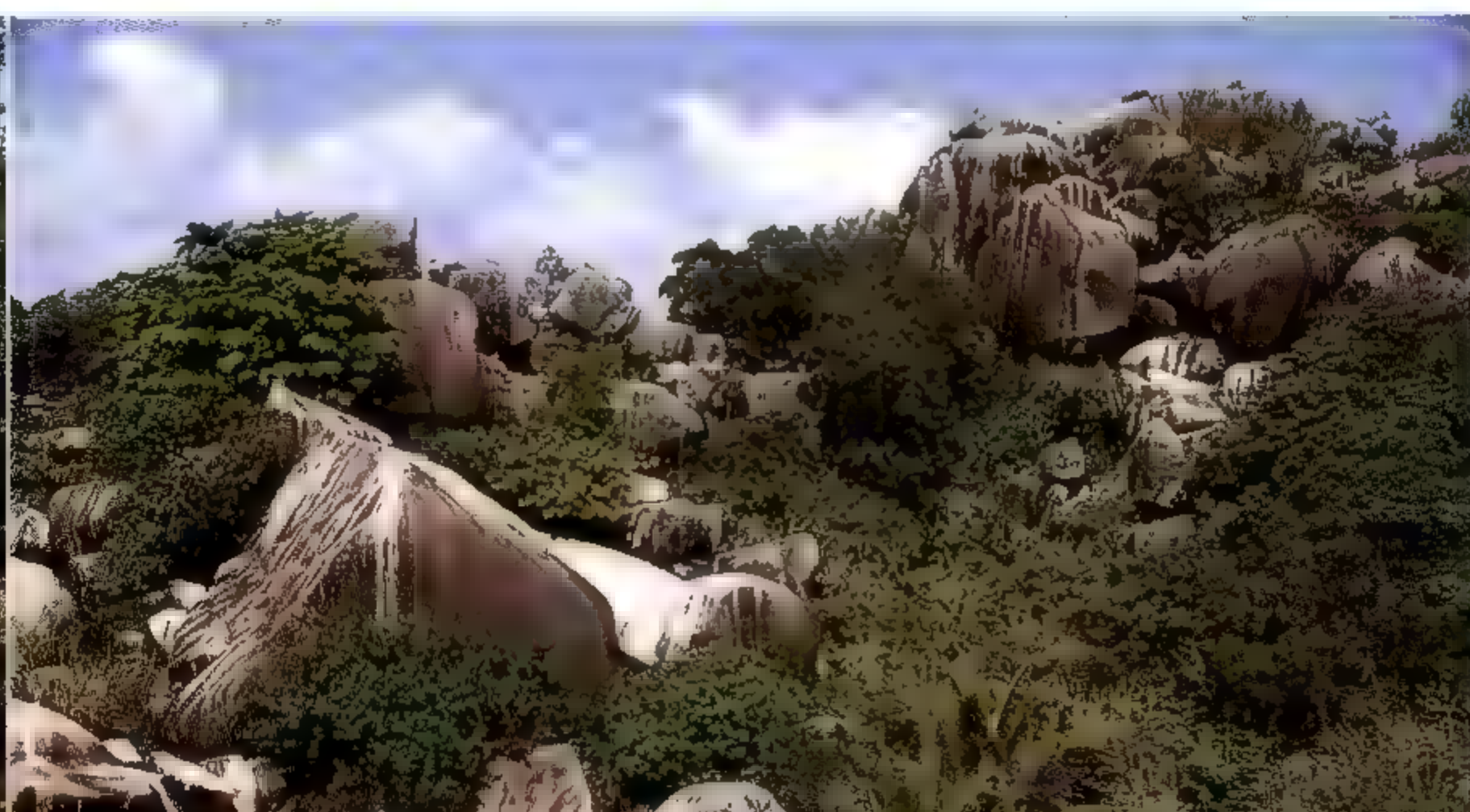
City Transport:

* Take bus from Sanya to Xincun Harbour, change to a boat for the Monkey Island. The bus-boat combined ticket costs 20 yuan.

* Qionghai City is well served with motor pedicabs, which charge 2 yuan for any distance within the city, and more for travelling to the suburbs. The 18-kilometre ride to the estuary of the Wanquan River estuary at Bobie Town costs 15-20 yuan.



The 18 Arhats "meditating" in a bamboo grove at the South Hill



A view of the Dongshan Hill

I'm an art designer with a movie company. Last year in order to shoot a movie, I had to look for a highland lake. The place I was looking for must be away from any city, and surrounded by mountains and forests. The lake water must be clear to give us the impression of an immortal's land. The name of Lugu Lake immediately came to my mind.



The primitive, calm and pure Mengsuo Lake

Looking for a Movie Shooting Site

Photos & article by Zhang Gong

Lugu indeed is a beautiful lake surrounded by graceful hills, but its size is too large and the villages around it are too many. The forests are also a bit too far away from the waterside. So we had to look for another more primitive lake.

In Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, friends suggested: "Go to Ximeng where the natural scenery at Mengsuo Lake better conforms to the requirement in your script." Immediately, we set out from Kunming, passing Yuxi,

Eshan, Yuanjiang and Pu'er to arrive in Simao after two days of driving. Here we were told that to go to Ximeng along the old road, we had to make a big detour passing through the tropical areas in Xishuangbanna, a trip which would at least take another two days. But to go along the newly built earth-surface road, it would take only one day. It all depended if we were prepared to endure the bumpy earth-surface road. Travelling on bumpy road for us movie artists is nothing new. As soon as



A branch from an ancient tree by Mengsuo Lake supporting 19 film artists

the day broke, we got on the road. The car wound its way along the zigzagging road on the mountain and at noon time, we crossed the Lancang River Bridge to enter a virgin forest whose thick foliage had almost totally prevented the sun from shining through. The further we travelled, the more zigzagging the road became and fewer settlers that could be sighted. When we eventually climbed to the summit, we found traces of slash-and-burn type of farming activities.

Along the winding road were mostly thick broad-leaf woods with sporadic huge trees. The gurgling of streams could be heard but thick tropical rain forests made it impossible to see them. Suddenly the car pulled a stop at the foot of a big black rock hill. It turned out that the county-level highway leading to Mengsuo Town had come to an end.

Walking Towards Mongsuo Lake

We got off and walked towards Mengsuo Town. Backed by a hill and facing a lake, the town had a cement paved street going through it from north to south and the street was flanked by many shops and stores. We found the Mengsuo Basin pretty large and the township was one of the few most richly endowed settlements in Ximeng County. The town bordered a village of the Dai people, one of the ethnic minorities in the country, where bamboo bungalows were built on the slopes and separated from each other by bamboo fences. The tall betel palm trees, the thick-foliaged teak trees, the sturdy banana trees and the graceful phoenix-tail bamboo plants served as natural barriers and gave the village a sense of natural freedom and tranquillity. A typical Dai style Buddhist temple stood on a piece of relatively elevated land in the village. A pagoda was surrounded by open ground and trees shot up prominently on the temple yard.

We walked around plots of rice paddies and went deeper into the mountain to a village resided by several dozen families of the Va people, another ethnic minority. Their houses looked more primitive and simply, making me think of the Banpo Village in Shaanxi, which was inhabited by people 5,000 years ago. The houses here used unbaked mud bricks or even bamboo plants to build the walls and had thatched roof. Some houses were in square shape while others appeared to be oblong. In each of the houses, there was a fireplace for providing warmth and cooking. As there were no windows, it was very dark inside the houses. I noticed people used wooden beds.


Early next morning, with several Dai kids serving as our guides, we went to the foot of the hill along the path between rice paddies. Then we climbed the hill along a small path. Soon



we were inside a tropical forest. In the damp and humid forest, trees stood closely against each other and their foliage were intertwined. There were aged trees whose thick trunks were covered with vine plants and green moss. There were also short bushes and delicate bamboo plants. Altogether they filled up the entire space. We turned left and right, now making our way forward by pulling along a big vine plant and then going through a huge hole on the trunk of a tree. We used both hands and feet to move ahead and by the time we were half way up the mountain, we found ourselves sweating all over. A typical tropical rain forest, it had banyan trees, pipal trees, palm trees and many other trees whose names were beyond my knowledge. Some had flat and wide roots, others had thick roots extending out of their branches. Murderous epiphyte plants were everywhere and many trees had died as a result of their tight clutching. At long last after we had explored forward in the dense forest, we found ourselves on the bank of Mengsuo Lake.

The Lake of an Immortal's Land

About one kilometre long on each side, this highland lake, some 1,000 metres above sea level, is embraced by tropical rain forests. Though not large in size, the lake is so deep that it seems bottomless. Its pure green water is accentuated by the colourful flowers blossoming on the banks. On the lake surface, mist curls up and drifts toward the forest, rendering the lake with a sense of mystery. The water is so calm, clear and transparent that it almost took my thoughts to transcend the worldliness. Most ideally for our film, several primitive trees stand close to the lake water and some of them actually have their roots standing in the water which is something out of the ordinary.

We really found the lake beautiful and fully up to our filming request. Our long hard journey were finally rewarded. 

Translated by F. Huang



Basalt of the Cenozoic Era

Photos & article by Jiang Hua

At the seaside five kilometres from Longjiao Town in Longhai County, Fujian Province, there is a well-preserved volcano crater dating back to the Cenozoic Era. The crater, appearing and disappearing with the rise and ebb of the sea, has a trumpet-shaped mouth and resembles a giant wok with a wide opening and narrow bottom. There is no way to tell what its central part looks like for it is submerged in the sea all year round.

The crater is about 100 metres in diameter, and its oval rim is lined

with what looks like finely chiselled pentagonal and hexagonal pillars orderly planted at 80° angles. The pillars are different sizes, with those on the outer ridge bigger than the inner ones. The large central columns are 70 to 80 centimetres in diameter and the smaller ones, about 40. There is a well-defined boundary between the columns, which are spaced at five millimetre intervals.



These basalt rocks created from the volcanic lava flow are deep grey, black and orange.

According to geographers, this crater is the result of three major eruptions. The basalt wrapped up in grey and black peridotite at the outer rim was from the first eruption. The second produced columnar coarse basalt in uniform pentagonal or hexagonal shapes. The grey and black angular basalt from the third eruption circle the crater's centre. What is surprising is that despite the passage of 22 million years, the crater is well preserved; its rocks are free from algae and oysters, and have retained their sharp edges and fresh look.

This crater is said to be the best preserved of its kind in China. It is not only a natural spectacle, but also a valuable reference for research into China's peripheral structure and the earth's crust.

Translated by Ling Yuan



1. The 22 million-year-old volcano crater near Longjiao Town
2. Basalt rocks from the volcanic eruptions
3. Dark-grey rocks lining the crater

Fifty Cents a Bundle: Self-service Stalls on a Rural Market

Photos & article by Xiao Xiongshuai



The two villages of Tanpu and Luofeng used to be the border between the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi. Today, both in Guangxi, they mark the border between Lingshan County under the Qinzhou City's jurisdiction and Hengxian County within Nanning's boundary. A small river runs between them. The custom of selling vegetables by self-service has been passed down from generation to generation here.



Every morning, bamboo baskets fully loaded with vegetables appear at the market stalls. The great variety of vegetables are cleanly washed and bound in small bundles. On each basket handles hangs a little bamboo basket and a small label which reads: "Fifty cents a bundle" or "One yuan a bundle". After dropping their baskets on the street, the owners simply leave to do other things. When buyers come, they make their choice and then put the money into the little basket. It is not until the evening that the sellers return and pack up their stalls, few of them bothering to count the money.

Commercial activities started early in this area in ancient times and trade has developed fairly well through the long history. Although there is the saying that "no trader is scrupulous", it is hard to find traces to prove it here. The simple and honest folk custom has been handed down over time. Curious, I asked some elderly folks when these "self-service vegetable stalls" had began, but none could give me a definite

answer. All they could tell was that this custom already existed when they were small kids; and that vegetables were sold this way on the old market, and again, on another older market. Today, although many of the original residents have moved out, the self-service vegetable stalls have remained and has always had brisk sales, except during the late 1950s when people's communes developed with the policy that "everyone eats from the same pot".

I guess that stall owners started this practice merely for their own convenience, not trying to influence others. Yet apparently these stalls have exerted a subtle influence on the local people, who have kept the simple folk tradition. At the mention of these self-service stalls, the

local villagers revealed an obvious kind of pride. I wonder if such stalls exist elsewhere. When I was taking photos of them, I saw a small boy stand on tiptoe putting his payment into the little basket at one such



vegetable stall. I sensed that this good tradition would be carried on.

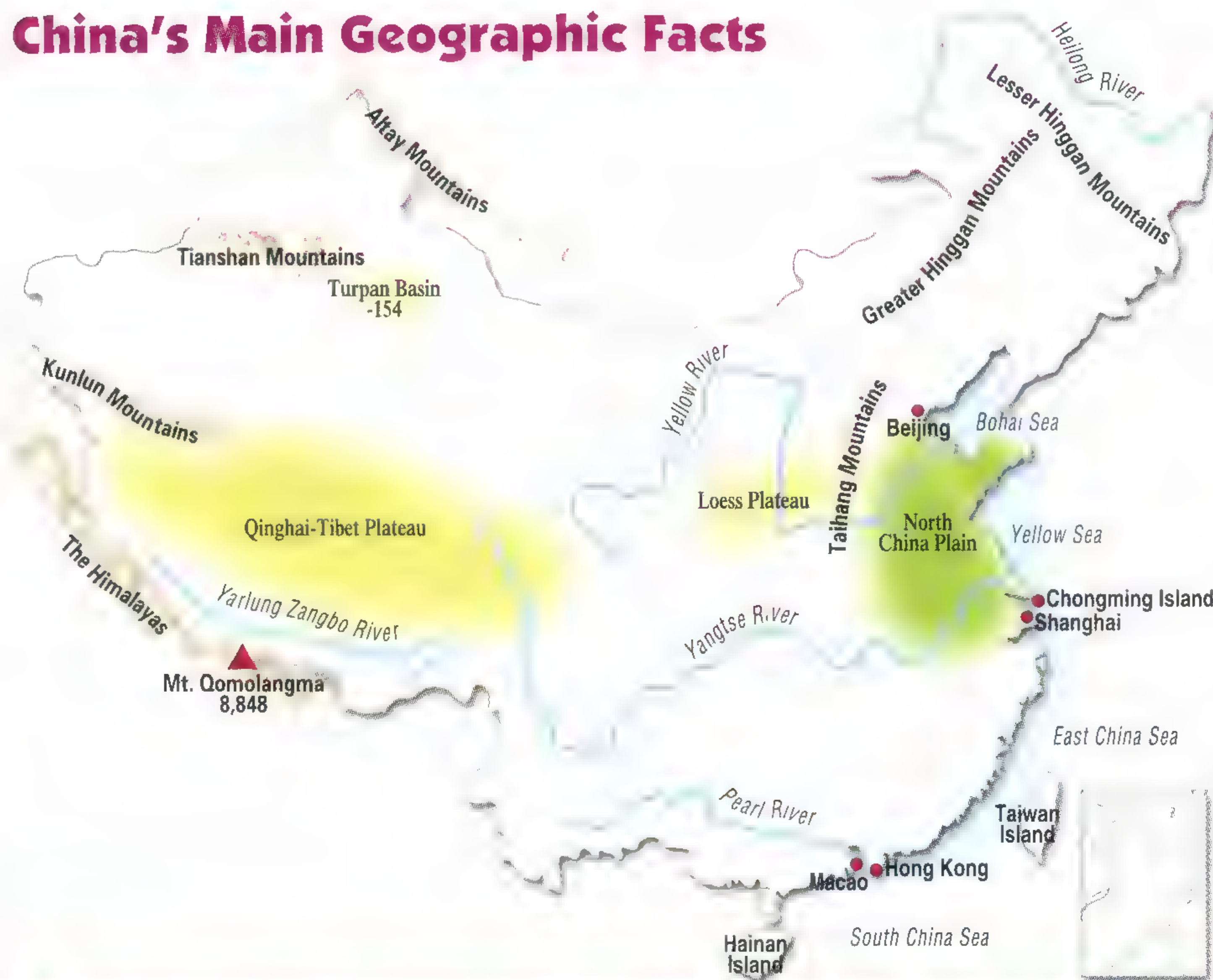
Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Location of the Two Villages



1. On sale with clearly marked prices
2. Stall holders put out fresh vegetables every morning.
3. A buyer putting his pay into a little plastic bag

China's Main Geographic Facts



China is situated in the eastern and central part of Asia, on the west coast of the Pacific Ocean. With a territory of 9.6 million square kilometres, one-fourth of the land of Asia and one-fifteenth that of the world, it is the third largest country on earth.

Its territory extends more than 5,500 kilometres from north to south and 5,200 kilometres from west to east.

Please send your questions and suggestions to: Hong Kong China Tourism English Department, 24/F Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong; Email: chinat@hkstar.com; Tel: (852) 2561 8001; Fax: 2561 8057, 2561 8196.

Seas and Islands

China's coastline extends 18,000 kilometres, from the mouth of the Yalu River in the Northeast to the mouth of the Beilun River on the China-Vietnam border in the Southwest. The country has more than 5,000 coastal islands, the majority of them scattered in the waters south of Hangzhou Bay and in the South China Sea.

The four seas off the Chinese coast are: the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea.

Taiwan is China's largest island, with an area of 36,000 square kilometres. The Nansha Islands are southernmost islands. Hainan Island is China's second largest island, with an area of 34,000 square kilometres. The third largest island, Chongming, lies at the mouth of the Yangtze.

Rivers

The Changjiang, or Yangtze River, is China's largest river. It flows 6,380 kilometres from west to east and empties itself into the East China Sea. The Three Gorges, the famous scenic attraction, are on the middle reaches of the river. Traditionally, the Yangtze is considered as the division line between northern and southern China.

The Huanghe, or Yellow River, is China's second longest river, with a length of 5,464 kilometres. It runs from west to east down to the Bohai Sea. The Yellow River Valley is considered as the cradle of Chinese Civilisation.

The Heilong (Black Dragon) River, 3,420 kilometres long, lies in Northeast China on the China-Russia border.

The Jujiang, or Pearl River, runs 2,197 kilometres with a flow of 11,075 cubic metres per second. It empties into the South China Sea, with Hong Kong and Macao lying on either side of its mouth.

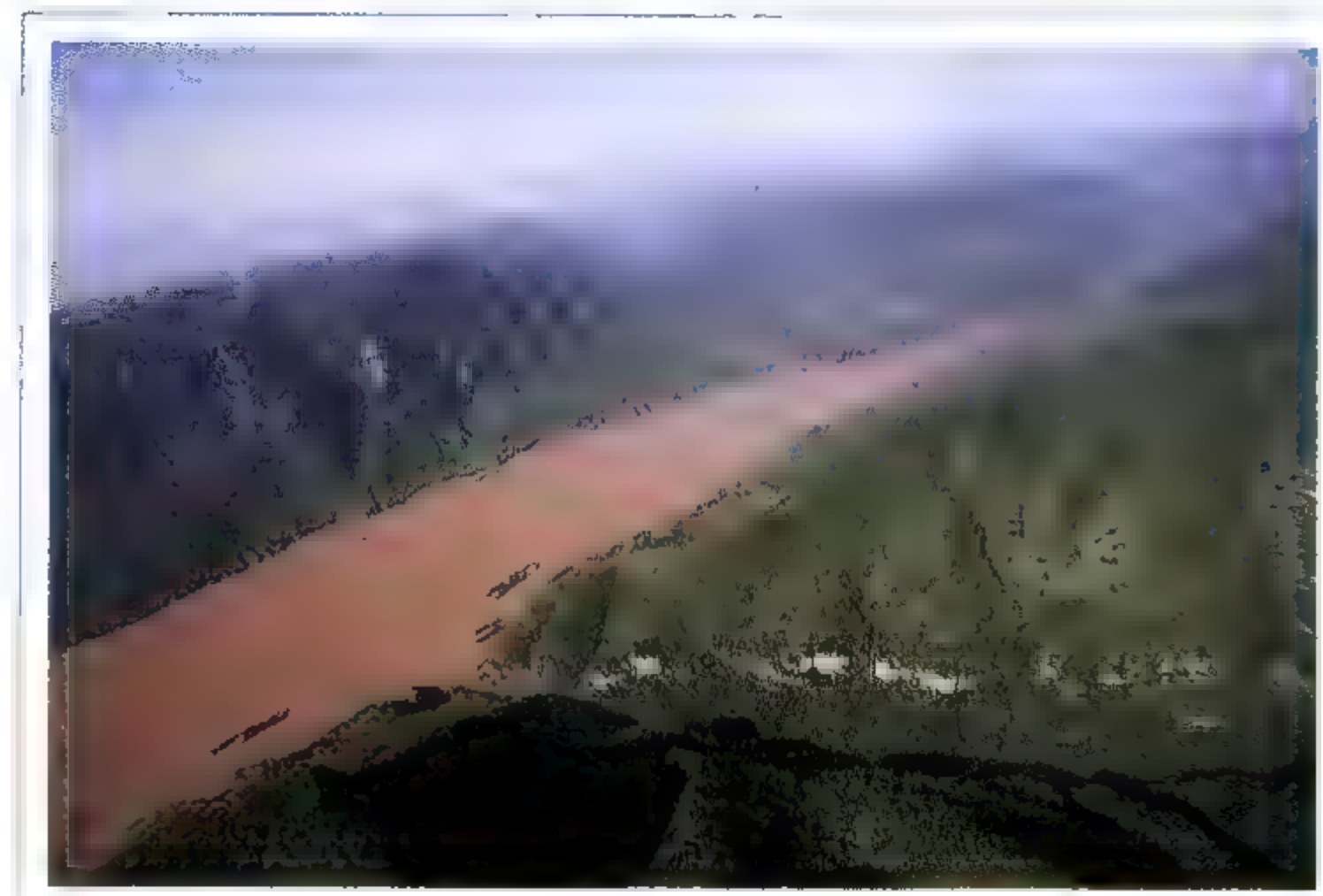
The Yarlung Zangbo River running in Tibet is 1,940 kilometres long. The next longest are the Lancang River (1,612 kilometres) and the Nujiang River (1,540 kilometres) in the Southwest.

Topography

China's topography is high in the west, with highlands and mountains, and low in the east, with plains and hills.

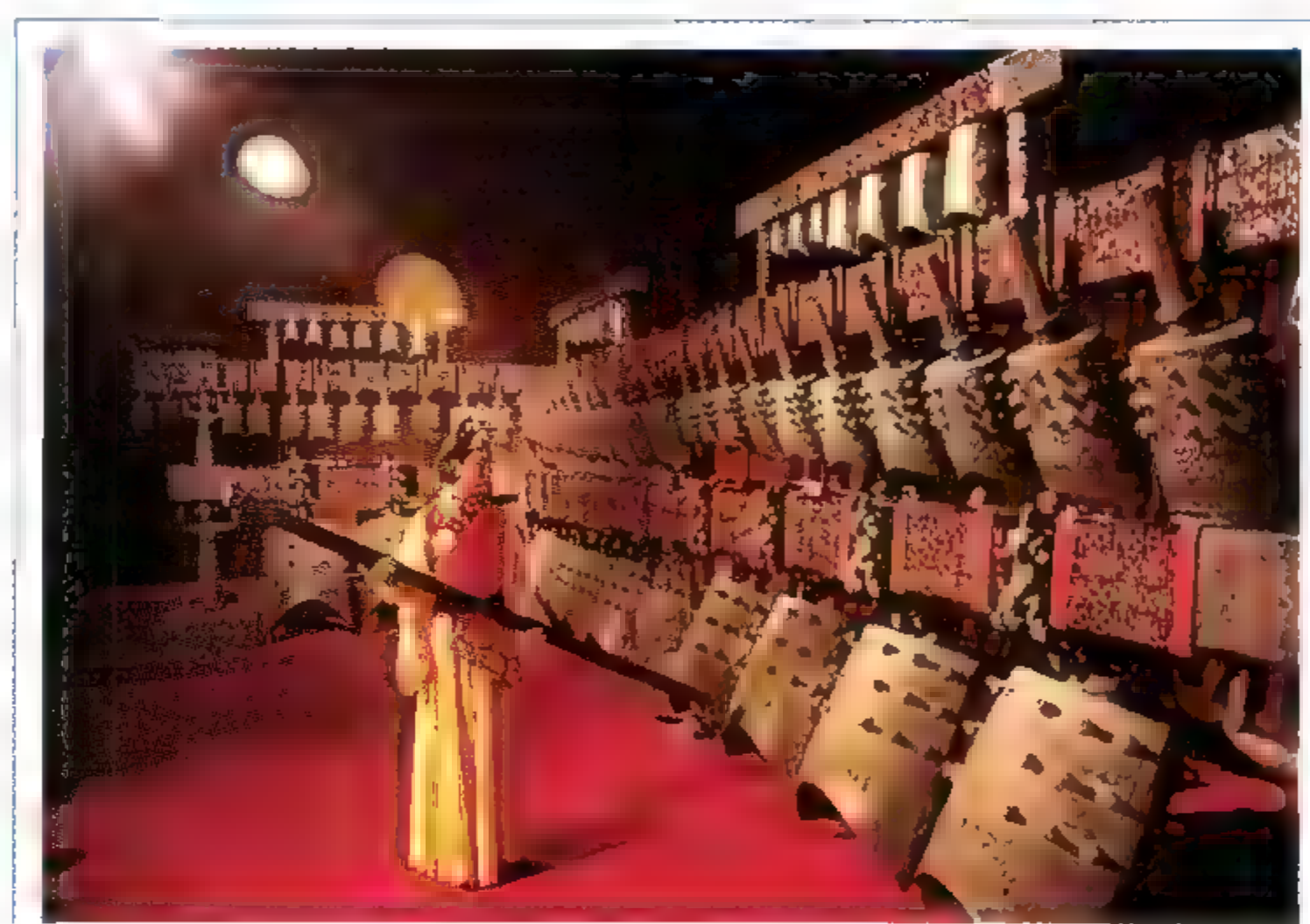
The highest area in China, which is also the "roof of the world", is the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with the world's highest peak, Mt. Qomolangma in the Himalayas, at 8,848 metres above sea level. The Altay and the Tianshan mountains are the main mountain ranges in Xinjiang. The Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, though lower than the former, is also mountainous. In the north of China lies the vast Loess Plateau. Between the loess highland and the North China Plain lies the north-south range of the Taihang Mountains. The rest of the territory is constituted by plains and hills, except the area where the Greater and Lesser Hinggan Mountains lie in the Northeast. The Turpan Basin in Xinjiang, 154 metres below sea level, is the lowest depression in China.

Celebrating the 19th anniversary of publication, China Tourism will present a special feature in the coming issue: view of the **Three Gorges** from the river, on the shore and from the sky. A woman traveller who trekked for thousands of miles to explore the magnificent Three Gorges tells her extraordinary and thrilling experiences. Overflying the Three Gorges with a helicopter gives you a bird's-eye view of the Three Gorges 8,000 metres high up in the sky.



by Zheng Yunfeng

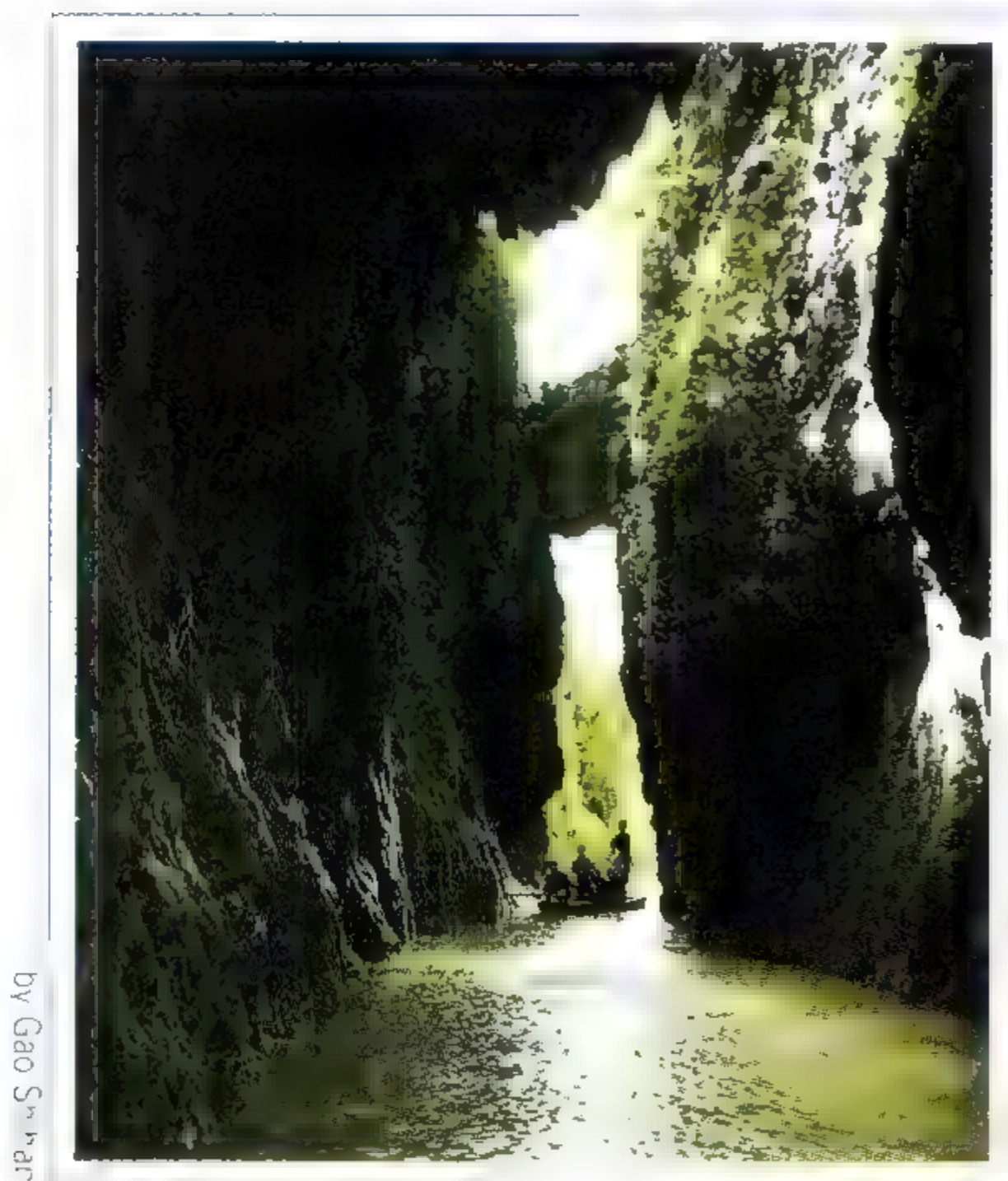
Wuhan, the city of rivers, is the start for the cruise upstream to the Three Gorges. It charms its visitors with a good many spectacles: a set of ancient bell chimes which can



by Li Youxiong

play Beethoven's works, a hotel adorned with 38 kilograms of gold, people gathering on the street every morning to have their breakfast....

Chongqing, the city of mountains, where the cruise downstream to the Three Gorges starts, is renowned for being one of China's "ovens" in the summer time. Nevertheless, the outskirts of this "oven" teem with verdant mountains and crystal-clear rivers, creating an ideal environment for escaping from the heat.



by Gao Shuang

A **"Chinese Titanic"** which had lain on the bed of the Yangtse for 61 years was recently brought to light again. Both the wreck and the veteran soldiers who experienced the episode are witnesses of the sorrowful war-ridden years.



by Zhou Guoqiang

Hotels in Lanzhou

| Name | Star | Address | Postcode | Tel | Fax |
|------------------|------|---------------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Legend Hotel | **** | 599 Tianshui Rd. | 730000 | (931) 8882876 | (931) 8887876 |
| Guanghua Hotel | *** | 231 Jiuquan Rd. | 730030 | (931) 8436168 | (931) 8438168 |
| Jincheng Hotel | *** | 363 Tianshui Rd. | 730000 | (931) 8416638 | (931) 8418438 |
| Lanzhou Hotel | *** | 434 Donggang Rd. W. | 730000 | (931) 8416321 | (931) 8418608 |
| Friendship Hotel | *** | 16 Xijin Rd. W. | 730050 | (931) 2333051 | (931) 2330304 |
| Huayi Hotel | ** | 14 Xijin Rd. W. | 730050 | (931) 2333051 | (931) 2330304 |
| Lanhua Hotel | ** | 222 Fuli Rd. | 730060 | (931) 7555981 | (931) 7557635 |
| Lanyuan Hotel | ** | 367 Yumen St. | 730060 | (931) 7554014 | (931) 7573700 |
| Victory House | ** | 127 Zhongshan Rd. | 730030 | (931) 8465221 | (931) 8461531 |
| Dizhi Hotel | ** | 85 Hongxing Lane, Dingxi Rd. S. | 730000 | (931) 8618880 | (931) 8616557 |
| Lanzhou Mansion | ** | 7-9 Tianshui Rd. | 730000 | (931) 8417210 | (931) 8417177 |
| Hongyun Hotel | ** | 5 Gaolan Rd. | 730000 | (931) 8826011 | (931) 8885687 |

Hotels in Chengdu

| Name | Star | Address | Postcode | Tel | Fax |
|---------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza | ***** | 31 Zongfu Rd. | 610016 | (28) 6786666 | (28) 6786599 |
| Jinjiang Hotel | ***** | 80, Section 2, Renmin Rd. S. | 610012 | (28) 5582222 | (28) 5581849 |
| Chengdu Hotel | **** | East Section, Shudu Rd. | 610066 | (28) 4448888 | (28) 4441603 |
| Minshan Hotel | **** | 55, Section 2, Renmin Rd. S. | 610021 | (28) 5583333 | (28) 5582154 |
| Yinhe Dynasty Inter-Continental Hotel | **** | 99 Lower Xishuncheng St. | 610016 | (28) 6618888 | (28) 6748837 |
| Chengdu Grand Hotel | *** | 29, Block B, Renmin Rd. N. | 610081 | (28) 3333888 | (28) 3336818 |
| Pearl International Hotel | *** | 329, Section 2, Jiefang Rd. | 610081 | (28) 3358068 | (28) 3320701 |
| Tibet Hotel | *** | 10 Renmin Rd. N. | 610081 | (28) 3333988 | (28) 3333526 |
| Jinhe Grand Hotel | *** | 18 Jinhe St., West Section, Shudu Rd. | 610031 | (28) 6642888 | (28) 6632037 |
| Jinxin Hotel | *** | 18 Airport Rd. | 610041 | (28) 5189518 | (28) 5189669 |
| Sichuan Hotel | *** | 31 Zongfu St. | 610016 | (28) 6755555 | (28) 6745263 |
| Garden Hotel | ** | 27 Dongfeng Rd. | 610061 | (28) 4445555 | (28) 4444581 |
| Wanguan Hotel | ** | Shuangliu Airport | | (28) 5581466 | |

Flights to and from Lanzhou

| Route | Days | Dep. | Arr. | Flight |
|---------------------|---------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Beijing — Lanzhou | 2 4 6 | 10:50 | 13:15 | WH2118 |
| | 1 3 5 7 | 12:00 | 14:25 | WH2116 |
| | 1 3 4 5 7 | 18:40 | 20:50 | WH2112 |
| | 2 6 | 19:25 | 21:55 | WH2146 |
| Lanzhou — Beijing | 1 3 5 7 | 09:00 | 11:10 | WH2115 |
| | 2 4 6 | 09:00 | 11:10 | WH2117 |
| | 2 6 | 12:30 | 14:40 | WH2145 |
| | 1 3 4 5 7 | 16:00 | 17:50 | WH2111 |
| Changsha — Lanzhou | 3 5 7 | 16:40 | 19:15 | WH2302 |
| Lanzhou — Changsha | 3 5 7 | 08:50 | 11:25 | WH2301 |
| Chengdu — Lanzhou | 1 4 5 7 | 08:00 | 09:15 | SZ4901 |
| | 2 4 6 | 20:15 | 21:40 | WH2416 |
| | 1 3 5 7 | 20:30 | 21:50 | WH2432 |
| Lanzhou — Chengdu | 2 4 6 | 14:00 | 15:20 | WH2415 |
| | 1 4 5 7 | 16:15 | 17:20 | SZ4902 |
| | 1 3 5 7 | 18:30 | 19:50 | WH2431 |
| Chongqing — Lanzhou | 3 6 | 08:30 | 09:55 | SZ4941 |
| Lanzhou — Chongqing | 3 6 | 16:45 | 18:20 | SZ4942 |
| Fuzhou — Lanzhou | 2 6 | 13:35 | 17:50 | WH2518 |
| Lanzhou — Fuzhou | 2 6 | 08:45 | 12:55 | WH2517 |
| Guangzhou — Lanzhou | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 12:15 | 15:15 | WH2312 |
| Lanzhou — Guangzhou | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 08:40 | 11:20 | WH2311 |
| Hangzhou — Lanzhou | 1 | 17:05 | 20:00 | WH2804 |
| Lanzhou — Hangzhou | 1 | 09:10 | 12:00 | WH2803 |
| Kunming — Lanzhou | 2 4 6 | 18:05 | 21:40 | WH2416 |
| Lanzhou — Kunming | 2 4 6 | 14:00 | 17:25 | WH2415 |
| Nanjing — Lanzhou | 3 6 | 08:00 | 10:40 | WH2825 |
| | 4 | 16:50 | 19:35 | WH2808 |
| Lanzhou — Nanjing | 4 | 08:45 | 11:10 | WH2807 |
| | 3 6 | 18:40 | 21:10 | WH2826 |
| Shanghai — Lanzhou | 2 6 | 19:15 | 21:50 | WH2512 |
| | 1 3 4 5 7 | 19:15 | 22:20 | WH2516 |
| Lanzhou — Shanghai | 1 3 4 5 7 | 15:25 | 18:15 | WH2515 |
| | 2 6 | 16:00 | 18:15 | WH2511 |
| Shenyang — Lanzhou | 3 7 | 16:25 | 19:35 | XO9606 |
| Lanzhou — Shenyang | 3 7 | 13:10 | 15:45 | XO9605 |
| Shenzhen — Lanzhou | 3 5 7 | 14:10 | 19:15 | WH2302 |
| Lanzhou — Shenzhen | 3 5 7 | 08:50 | 13:30 | WH2301 |
| Taiyuan — Lanzhou | 3 7 | 15:40 | 17:30 | WH2574 |
| Lanzhou — Taiyuan | 3 7 | 09:10 | 10:50 | WH2573 |
| Urümqi — Lanzhou | 1 5 | 09:10 | 13:50 | XO9215 |
| | 3 7 | 09:55 | 12:30 | XO9605 |
| | 2 4 | 10:45 | 13:10 | XO9507 |
| | 1 4 5 7 | 13:25 | 15:35 | SZ4902 |
| | 3 6 | 13:50 | 16:05 | SZ4942 |
| | 1 4 6 | 14:15 | 16:30 | WH2904 |
| | 3 6 | 15:20 | 18:00 | WH2826 |
| | 6 | 15:30 | 17:30 | MU7902 |
| Lanzhou — Urümqi | 1 4 5 7 | 09:55 | 12:35 | SZ4901 |
| | 3 6 | 10:35 | 13:10 | SZ4941 |
| | 1 4 6 | 11:00 | 13:35 | WH2903 |
| | 3 6 | 11:20 | 14:40 | WH2825 |
| | 6 | 12:35 | 14:40 | MU7901 |
| | 1 5 | 14:50 | 19:50 | XO9216 |
| | 3 7 | 20:15 | 23:05 | XO9606 |
| | 2 4 | 20:50 | 23:40 | XO9508 |

* For reference only.

| Route | Days | Dep. | Arr. | Flight |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Wenzhou — Lanzhou | 6 | 08:35 | 11:50 | MU7901 |
| | 1 5 | 13:40 | 17:50 | WH2538 |
| | 2 4 | 17:20 | 20:10 | XO9508 |
| Lanzhou — Wenzhou | 1 5 | 08:45 | 13:00 | WH2537 |
| | 2 4 | 13:50 | 16:35 | XO9507 |
| | 6 | 18:10 | 21:35 | MU7902 |
| Wuhan — Lanzhou | 1 5 | 09:10 | 12:10 | WU231 |
| | 2 6 | 15:45 | 17:50 | WH2518 |
| | 1 5 | 15:45 | 17:50 | WH2538 |
| Lanzhou — Wuhan | 1 5 | 08:45 | 10:50 | WH2537 |
| | 2 6 | 08:45 | 10:50 | WH2517 |
| | 1 5 | 13:10 | 16:05 | WU232 |
| Xiamen — Lanzhou | 2 4 6 | 07:45 | 12:20 | MF8209 |
| | 4 | 14:15 | 19:35 | WH2808 |
| | 1 | 14:45 | 20:00 | WH2804 |
| Lanzhou — Xiamen | 4 | 08:45 | 13:35 | WH2807 |
| | 1 | 09:10 | 14:10 | WH2803 |
| | 2 4 6 | 13:05 | 17:25 | MF8210 |
| Xi'an — Lanzhou | 1 4 6 | 09:20 | 10:20 | WH2903 |
| | 3 5 7 | 10:40 | 11:40 | WH2231 |
| | 2 4 6 | 10:55 | 11:55 | H4167 |
| | 1 5 | 11:10 | 12:10 | WU231 |
| | 2 5 | 20:35 | 21:35 | WH2222 |
| Lanzhou — Xi'an | 2 5 | 09:05 | 10:05 | WH2221 |
| | 2 4 6 | 12:45 | 13:35 | H4168 |
| | 1 5 | 13:10 | 14:05 | WU232 |
| | 3 5 7 | 17:10 | 18:05 | WH2232 |
| | 1 4 6 | 17:10 | 18:15 | WH2904 |
| | | | | |

Flights to and from Jingdezhen

| Route | Days | Dep. | Arr. | Flight |
|------------------------|------|-------|-------|--------|
| Beijing — Jingdezhen | 1 5 | 09:10 | 11:30 | CA1595 |
| Jingdezhen — Beijing | 1 5 | 16:40 | 19:00 | CA1596 |
| Guangzhou — Jingdezhen | 1 5 | 14:35 | 16:00 | CA1392 |
| Jingdezhen — Guangzhou | 1 5 | 12:10 | 13:45 | CA1391 |
| Jinan — Jingdezhen | 2 5 | 07:50 | 11:20 | SC791 |
| | 1 4 | 08:10 | 11:20 | SC791 |
| Jingdezhen — Jinan | 1 4 | 16:20 | 19:35 | SC792 |
| | 2 5 | 16:20 | 19:45 | SC792 |
| Nanjing — Jingdezhen | 2 5 | 10:35 | 11:20 | SC791 |
| | 1 4 | 10:35 | 11:20 | SC791 |
| Jingdezhen — Nanjing | 1 4 | 16:20 | 17:20 | SC792 |
| | 2 5 | 16:20 | 17:25 | SC792 |
| Wuhan — Jingdezhen | 2 | 11:20 | 12:00 | Z2387 |
| Jingdezhen — Wuhan | 2 | 17:20 | 18:05 | Z2388 |
| Xiamen — Jingdezhen | 2 5 | 14:10 | 15:50 | SC792 |
| | 1 4 | 14:20 | 15:50 | SC792 |
| | 2 | 15:00 | 16:20 | Z2388 |
| Jingdezhen — Xiamen | 2 5 | 12:20 | 13:40 | SC791 |
| | 1 4 | 12:20 | 13:50 | SC791 |
| | 2 | 12:40 | 13:50 | Z2387 |
| Zhengzhou — Jingdezhen | 2 | 09:20 | 12:00 | Z2387 |
| Jingdezhen — Zhengzhou | 2 | 17:20 | 20:00 | Z2388 |

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